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AUGUST 2014 VOLUME 24 ISSUE 8

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM MAGAZINE

Sight & Sound



GROWING UP ON CAMERA: RICHARD LINKLATER'S

BOYHOOD

PLUS

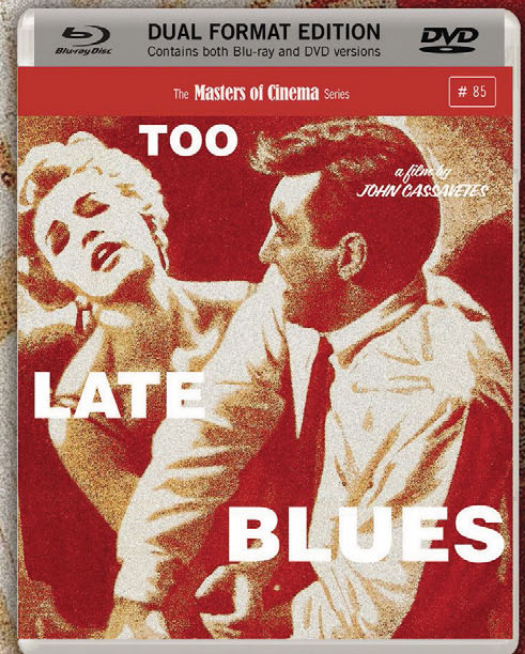
- THE MODERN ACTION-FILM HERO ● STEVE MCQUEEN ON 'DO THE RIGHT THING' AT 25
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Richard Linklater interview

The acclaimed director discusses his 'indie epic' *Boyhood*, which was filmed over 12 years in order to capture its protagonist from childhood through to college. Here he explains why the process of filmmaking is more important than the end result. **Interview by Ryan Gilbey**

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COVER

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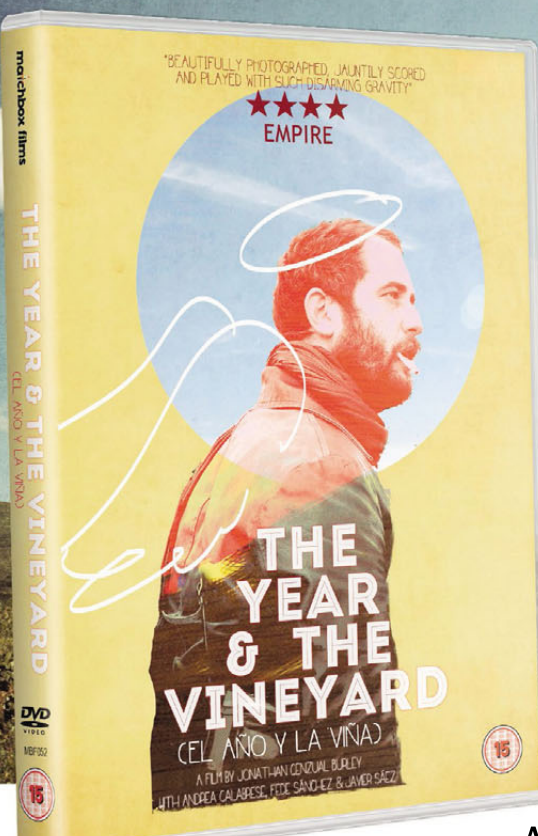
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Editorial Nick James



GODARD FOR BREAKFAST

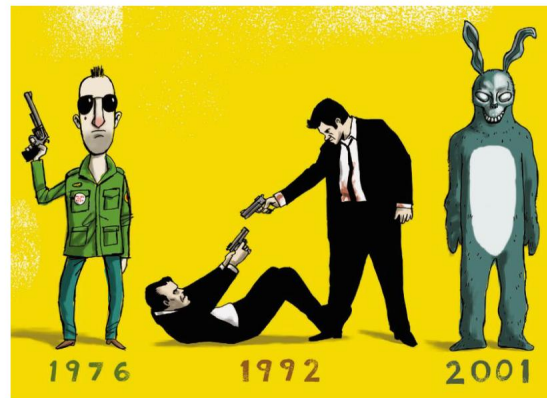
One thing that can bother experienced film critics, but that rarely gets written about, is when we encounter new filmmakers who seem to have seen hardly any films older than the ones they watched in their childhoods, and who know little about film history or, worse, about the great examples of film style and how to steal them. This syndrome is usually defined by naming the point at which said neophyte seems to believe cinema began – as in ‘...for whom cinema began with *Taxi Driver*’ (often said when I was a newbie critic) or ‘with *Reservoir Dogs*’ (said from around the millennium onwards). Today you might say ‘with *Donnie Darko*’ or ‘with *Fight Club*’, though the uncertainty of the choice here speaks of how difficult it has become to build consensus around recent films as being definitive of their moment.

British critics tend to presume that this occasional filmmaker ignorance is a British disease, that directors from everywhere else were fed Godard for breakfast from infancy and that even such a brazen French populist as Luc Besson is steeped in Fritz Lang (given *The Fifth Element*, he probably is). In my experience, where ignorance of the likes of Bergman, Fellini, Kurosawa, Dreyer and Orson Welles has been worn as a badge of defiance by one wave of UK filmmakers, the succeeding wave will be all the more likely to advertise their cinephilia. Taking in to account the likes of Ben Wheatley, Joanna Hogg, Richard Ayoade and Yann Demange, to name but four, we seem to be living at a time when our most intriguing filmmakers feed off film's vast corpus of classics rather than worry about having their own virginal vision undermined by a bunch of old black-and-white works shot on that ancient film stuff. Long may it last, says the critical chorus I feel standing right behind me.

The relative knowledge or ignorance of filmmakers is on my mind because I recently attended a discussion around the launch of *Educating Film-Makers: Past, Present and Future*, a book by Duncan Petrie and Rod Stoneman that the Amazon blurb describes as “a timely consideration of both the history and the current challenges facing practice-based film training”. I haven't read it yet, but the discussion prompted a few quandaries and an examination of my own former presumptions.

Time was when one could survey the UK filmmaking field and tell which filmmaker was

We seem to be living at a time when our most intriguing filmmakers feed off film's vast corpus of classics rather than worry about having their virginal vision undermined by a bunch of old movies



likely to have originated where. Broadly speaking, the main sources of a filmmaking education in the 1990s could be loosely characterised thus: super 8 wielding post-Jarmanites and other avant gardists were produced by London's Central Saint Martins and one or two other art schools; the Royal College of Art tended instead to supply hotshots who more often gravitated towards the then-flush music video and advertising industries; the National School of Film and Television produced technically high-quality graduates seemingly tailor-made for Hollywood sets of the bigger budget variety – although they also had such glorious left-field exceptions as Terence Davies; and the London Film School often seemed to provide for filmmakers from non-anglophone countries, though its most famous alumni Mike Leigh and Michael Mann hailed, respectively, from Salford and Chicago. All this is, of course, a huge simplification.

Whatever the one-time truth of that sketch, it is no longer possible to approximate filmmaker groups in that way. The film schools continue to funnel people into the discipline, each in their own distinctive fashion, but given cheap high-quality technology, it is now more feasible than ever for writers, or theatre, television and advertising directors, or even total outsiders, to get to make a feature film. But I say feature film singular because more than one is the mountain that far fewer get to climb, whatever their education.

Film school teachers seem to feel that students find the film knowledge they need for their own work. And of course there are many varieties of director, each of whom has a different arrangement of the numerous skills they ought to have, only some of which are teachable. But for me the best wisdom around this issue came from Stoneman when I asked him about filmmakers' knowledge of film history. He said, and I paraphrase, it's not just knowledge of films that matters, but of the wider culture of literature, theatre and the other arts. Now there's a truth that could just as profitably be learned by film critics. ☺

IN THE FRAME

BAND ON THE RUN



Star jump: *A Hard Day's Night* affected the way pop music performance is shot and edited to this day

Richard Lester's *A Hard Day's Night* is an ingenious piece of sustained improvisation that created a new vocabulary for filmed performance

By Sam Davies

A Hard Day's Night, 50 years old this July, falls into that category of films you can easily feel you've seen without seeing. The Beatles in drainpipe trousers, Chelsea boots and black and white, mop-topped and mob tailed, chased here, there and everywhere around Liverpool's Lime Street station – this is a sequence so often imitated, parodied and quoted that it fully merits that most overused of words, iconic. Other scenes wallpaper almost every Beatles documentary you'd care to mention: the group larking on a playing field, caught on film from a circling helicopter, or Ringo Starr on a strop, short-lived sabbatical from the group, drifting along a riverside in an oversized overcoat. And then, too, it's tempting to discount it as a cash-in and spin-off, a supplement to a music career that can only ever be a secondary work.

In fact the music in *A Hard Day's Night* came after the film, with Lennon and McCartney writing new material specifically for it. The film was titled and only then was the song written, when producer Walter Shenson decided they needed one more number with which to open and close. Shot in a matter of weeks in spring 1964, just after the group's February appearances on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, *A Hard Day's Night* was made under pressure, with the tidal wave of American popularity gathering behind them and a July release date looming in front. The result is an ingenious piece of sustained improvisation by director Richard Lester, screenwriter Alun Owen and the four Beatles, made on the fly and yet combining classic cinematic elements with a breezy irreverence that affected the way pop music performance is shot and edited to this day.

"The chase," Alfred Hitchcock said in a 1950 interview, "seems to me the final expression of the motion picture medium... I would say the chase is almost indigenous to movie technique as a whole." And *A Hard Day's Night* could be subtitled 'Band on the Run': from the opening Lime Street scenes to its conclusion with the

ON OUR
RADAR

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari
A restored version of Robert Wiene's 1920 German expressionist horror is rereleased in UK cinemas by Eureka/Masters of Cinema on 29 August, and on Blu-ray and DVD on 29 September.



London Indian Film Festival

Taking place from 10-17 July, the festival highlights the best of recent Indian cinema, including Anup Singh's 'Qissa: The Tales of a Lonely Ghost', a drama about the 1947 partition starring Irrfan Khan, and an adaptation of Satyajit Ray's children's tale 'The World of Goopi and Bagha' (right).





The fantastic four: The Beatles were surprisingly capable physical comedians

group racing to a helicopter (for a “midnight matinee in Wolverhampton”), and in between John, Paul and George hunting the AWOL Ringo with packs of police on their heels. Its repeated use of the stage direction ‘Exeunt, pursued by fans’ echoes Gene Kelly’s escape via Debbie Reynolds’s car in *Singin’ in the Rain*. But the element of clowning also taps in to currents from the earliest film comedies. Ringo’s disconsolate wander alludes to Chaplin and Keaton, but it’s not the only such moment: all four of The Beatles were surprisingly capable physical comedians. When a song features and the group isn’t shown performing it, it usually soundtracks them in extended slapstick goofs – as when they stumble on to a fire escape, and after a hectic dash down it (one almost as dizzying as the Eiffel Tower descent in *The Lavender Hill Mob*), they run wild on an empty playing field.

Yet *A Hard Day’s Night* is predominantly forward-looking. Parallels with the *nouvelle vague* may be slightly overplayed, but they are unquestionably there, in its fleetness of foot, and faith in the simple equation of band + camera + wit = film. And it’s there too in its impatience with perfection: for the happily amateur dance scene in Godard’s *Bande à part* (released the same year), see George Harrison knocking over an amp on stage or losing a shoe boarding a helicopter. Lester’s liberal use of handheld cameras, meanwhile, suffuses *A Hard Day’s Night* with a kind of fugitive twitchiness, a subtle sense that anyone might

just cut and run – even a cameraman.

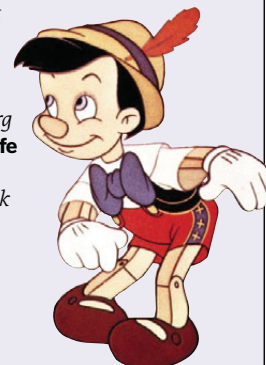
Richard Lester and editor John Jympson arguably invented a new vocabulary for capturing stage performance, with multiple mobile cameras weaving in between the musicians. Stylistic tics to be seen in any given moment of present-day Glastonbury coverage can be seen coming in to focus for the first time here. Close-ups of Starr’s foot on a kick-drum pedal; a shot down the gleaming strings on a guitar neck; the camera roaming behind Starr to gaze out through the band to the wall of teenage faces creating a wall of sound. (The soundtrack, remixed in 5.1 surround by Giles Martin, captures that sound in unnerving, unearthly detail.) Lester often shows us the multiple, unixed camera feeds seen on monitors by the TV director (played by Victor Spinetti): it’s a neat device which brings the mechanics of the medium to the fore and lets the viewer’s eye skip freely from viewpoint to viewpoint. One can easily imagine George Harrison being riveted by such details, and that’s one more legacy to be remembered when watching *A Hard Day’s Night* – a gleam in the eye that would become Harrison’s HandMade Films. **S**

i *A Hard Day’s Night* is rereleased at BFI Southbank, London, and UK cinemas nationwide on 4 July. A selection of shooting scripts, original posters and on-set photos from *A Hard Day’s Night* and *Help!* will be on display in the Mezzanine at BFI Southbank until 21 September

LISTOMANIA FILMS ABOUT BOYHOOD

As Richard Linklater’s *Boyhood* hits UK cinemas, we pick ten other classic films charting the trials of growing up through young male eyes.

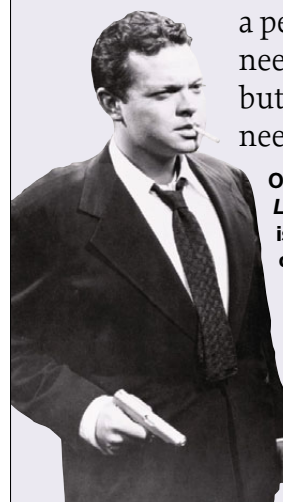
- 1 **The Only Son** (1936)
Ozu Yasujiro
- 2 **Pinocchio** (1940)
Ben Sharpsteen, Hamilton Luske
- 3 **Little Fugitive** (1953)
Ray Ashley, Morris Engel, Ruth Orkin
- 4 **Pather Panchali** (1955)
Satyajit Ray
- 5 **The 400 Blows** (1959)
François Truffaut
- 6 **Ivan’s Childhood** (1962)
Andrei Tarkovsky
- 7 **L’Enfance nue** (1969)
Maurice Pialat
- 8 **Kes** (1969)
Ken Loach
- 9 **E.T.** (1982)
Steven Spielberg
- 10 **The Tree of Life** (2010)
Terrence Malick



QUOTE OF THE MONTH ORSON WELLES

‘A writer needs a pen, an artist needs a brush, but a filmmaker needs an army’

Orson Welles’s *The Lady from Shanghai* is rereleased in cinemas on 25 July



Electric Shadows: A Century of Chinese Cinema

The latest BFI Compendium takes a tour through the history of Chinese cinema. Among the expert contributors is ‘S&S’ regular Tony Rayns. Available from shop.bfi.org.uk, Amazon and local bookshops.



Gotta Dance, Gotta Dance!

A season of dance movies swings in to BFI Southbank, London, throughout July and August. Films range from Fred Astaire classics (‘Top Hat’), choreographer portraits (Wim Wenders’s 3D ‘Pina’) to a little-known exploration of dance in everyday life (‘Routes: Dancing to New Orleans’).

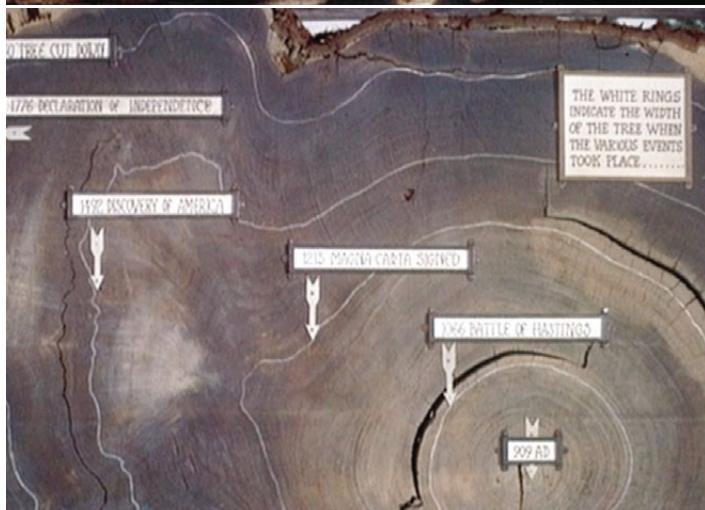


Welcome to New York

The last Abel Ferrara film to receive a theatrical release in the UK was ‘The Blackout’ in 1997. After the success of his controversial tale about the Dominique Strauss-Kahn affair (right) on French video-on-demand – it drew 100,000 views in eight days – the film arrives on UK screens and VoD on 8 August.



ROOT AND BRANCH ISSUES



Rings of power: James Stewart as Scottie, and Kim Novak as Judy/Madeleine among the redwoods in *Vertigo*

Trees represent both the reassuring permanence of nature and the terror of ancient, unknown forces



By Hannah McGill

"Here I was born, and there I died. It was only a moment for you. You took no notice," says Kim Novak's Judy

(while in her guise as Madeleine) in *Vertigo* (1958) as she measures the brief span of a human life in the rings of a 2,000-year-old redwood tree trunk. Her tone – at once mournful and consoled – expresses a certain duality in the presentation of nature's vaster and more ancient manifestations in cinema. That which can dwarf our petty woes and worries can also dwarf our hopes, our joys, whatever we suppose our lives to be worth. Cinema, itself a child of industrial and scientific processes, has an ambiguous relationship with wilderness. It cannot rail too hard against industry, being a part thereof; and it cannot worship untrodden places without treading on them. Hollywoodland was not a woodland, but a real-estate development.

Trees embody at once the comforting permanence of something older than man, the possibility of escape from mechanised and money-driven living; and atavistic, uncontrollable forces, frightening precisely because they pre-date and may well post-date us. In Noah Baumbach's *Margot at the Wedding* (2007), a beloved tree in the central family's garden represents at once the clan's old-money solidity and worthiness, and its woes and vulnerabilities. Its roots are decayed; vulgar, poor neighbours want it cut down; and when the niggly and neurotic Margot (Nicole Kidman) climbs it in a fit of showy girlishness, she gets stuck and has to be rescued by firemen.



La Jetée

The threat posed by trees is explicit in the forest scene in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), which retains an uncommon power to unsettle and disturb. Having been freed by her intended assassin, who tells her to run away and "hide in the woods – anywhere", Snow White is menaced by trees that sprout hands to grab at her, mouths to devour her and eyes to glare at her. The vaguely sexual character of Snow White's crisis – a young girl alone being clawed at – finds full realisation in *The Evil Dead* (1982), when Cheryl (Ellen Sandweiss) is trapped, stripped and penetrated by a possessed tree. Trees harbour knowledge both good and



Nicole Kidman in *Margot at the Wedding*

bad. In *Sleepy Hollow* (1999), the 'Tree of the Dead' is both a repository for corpses and a gateway to other worlds; if pierced, it oozes blood. Middle Earth has its own tree-like spirits, the giant Ents, while the Harry Potter franchise – that grab-bag of resonant concepts from fairytales and children's fiction – has the Whomping Willow, a sentient tree that hits out if disturbed and that hides a secret passageway.

In Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962), and Terry Gilliam's expanded reimagining, *Twelve Monkeys* (1995), the secret passageway is back through time. Both films reference *Vertigo's* sequoias, but propose that love might have the power to reverse the tree rings' spiral of passing time – just as *Vertigo's* 'Scottie' (James Stewart) seeks to bring a dead woman back to life by sheer force of desire. Judy's dreamy musings in the forest form part of her double performance – being Madeleine being Carlotta – but also highlight and prefigure her own coming fate: first, to be barely noticed by Scottie, in favour of the elusive Madeleine, and then to die. Her assertion of a linear time frame in which life and death happen once, however, is challenged by Scottie's subjective reality, in which the death of the love object, Madeleine, is experienced twice; he finds her, sees her 'die', recreates her, and sees her die again. His imagination combined with Judy's performance forges a woman who has more reality for him than does the flesh-and-blood Judy, even once he is intellectually

The forest scene in 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' retains an uncommon power to unsettle and disturb

aware that she does not exist. This capacity of desire to override lived reality – more than the supposed 'necrophilia' often cited in reference to the film, and to which Hitchcock himself referred – is the source of *Vertigo's* creepy power. It is not love of death that compels Scottie towards his imaginary Madeleine, but horror of it; in his impossible infatuation, we glimpse the romantic narcissist's refusal to accept the limitations of the lifespan that Judy measures on the tree stump. As long as he loves a woman without physical reality, he places himself, like his counterpart in *La Jetée*, outside of time – beyond the rings it builds in trees and the changes it wreaks upon real people. ☹



Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

THE FIVE KEY...

PHOTOGRAPHER DOCS

As *Finding Vivian Maier* opens in the UK, we pick the best documentary portraits of snappers under the lens

By Isabel Stevens

In recent years there has been a proliferation of documentaries about all kinds of shutterbugs. War photojournalist Don McCullin, colour pioneer Saul Leiter, landscape surveyor Edward Burtynsky, Brazilian artist-cum-junk-Arcimboldoist Vik Muniz and seminal chronicler of the US Civil Rights Movement Gordon Parks are just a few who have had their portrait taken for the big screen. The latest addition is Charlie Siskel's tribute to secretive Chicago street photographer Vivian Maier, out this month. Looking back over studies made for both TV and cinema, the best portraits offer intimacy with, and insight into, their subjects as well as an imaginative approach to still images.



2 Masters of Photography: Diane Arbus (1972)

Made just a year after Arbus's suicide and introduced by her daughter Doon, this montage of Arbus's portraits comes alive with the photographer's own frank confessions – "They tend to like me. I think I'm kind of two-faced" – culled from recordings from her lectures.



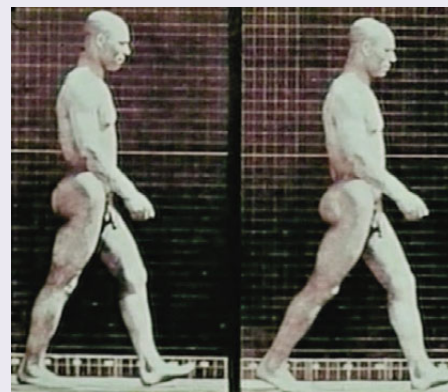
4 William Eggleston in the Real World (2005)

Guessing what the American master of the everyday will snap as he wanders the streets is one of the many pleasures of Michael Almereyda's portrait. While many filmmakers ape their subject's style, his naturalistic cinematography makes the photographer's trademark vivid hues all the more arresting.



1 Watch the Birdie (1963)

Four years before joining Magnum Photos, David Hurn was the focus of Ken Russell's Monitor short. Russell is in his element observing Hurn shooting nuns, strippers and models, but what stands out are Hurn's candid recollections. About a war reportage shot of a boy: "I keep this one to remind me that he died the next day."



3 Eadweard Muybridge, Zoopraxographer (1975)

Thom Andersen's little-seen debut feature is a minimal forensic essay analysing and animating Muybridge's many motion studies. Debunking the idea that he was simply cinema's forefather, Anderson dwells on the radical nature of Muybridge's nudes and their myriad poses.



5 Bill Cunningham New York (2010)

In his ode to the octogenarian photographer, Richard Press tries to keep up with Cunningham as he roams Manhattan, hunting street fashion for his weekly *New York Times* column. A documentary that clearly endorses the views of its cheap plastic poncho-wearing subject – that style is never synonymous with money or youth.

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FAST AND FURIOUS

Prolific filmmakers like Tsui Hark, Scorsese and Fassbinder are driven by a creative urgency, part intoxication and part childlike joy



By Mark Cousins

In the era of fast, we revere slow. Slow food, whisky aged for 20 years, the long-in-the-writing novel. Gestation is a virtue these days.

But we still need speed. Some people seem to have a particular inner urgency, a need to make stuff fast. Frank Lloyd Wright made 532 buildings, for example – almost manically prolific. Charles Dickens walked fast and wrote fast. Productivity can often be explained by society and industry. In the 1920s, John Ford directed 37 of his 140 or so films because films were made quickly then, in a factory manner. But sometimes people make a lot of stuff for inner rather than outer reasons. Rainer Werner Fassbinder's 40-plus film credits in about 16 years were not the product of the New German Cinema's speed, they were the product of his speed, his clock.

So what causes this kind of speed? Some of it is cocaine rapidity/vapidity, but other things are more interesting. Fassbinder – cinema's Jack Kerouac in some ways – lived against the clock, and loved against the clock. He notched up lovers like his near namesake Michael Fassbender in Steve McQueen's *Shame*, as if lots of fucking, like lots of filmmaking, keeps you alive, or keeps death at arm's length. Why did he work so fast? Is it because he knew that he was destroying himself, so packed a whole career in before his demise at 37? There's probably some truth in that, but it's too Freudian. It needs something else.

Firstly, there's what could be called the cortisol effect. The speed of filmmakers like Martin Scorsese and Tsui Hark is fight or flight, wired and omnidirectional, pivoting in the world with almost cubist hyperactivity. And then there's the thought that creativity is its own intoxicant. To make is to be buzzed, to be in the zone. Plus, at the end of the making, unlike taking drugs, there's something more in the world rather than something less, something that came out of your head. Filmmaking as a proxy drug? Michael Winterbottom? If you're going to be addicted to something, it might as well be filmmaking – a thought that makes you wonder whether, without his films, Fassbinder might have died even younger.

The intoxicant explanation feels right (and chimes with my own experience – I made four films in the last year). But there are other things, too. Take the pent-up. Jean-Luc Godard's fecundity (117 credits and counting, including shorts) comes in part, surely, because he has theories about so much – language, memory, society, community, class, politics, women, the Holocaust, cinema, etc. Poor guy, he can't even go for a pizza without wanting to make a film about the relationship between pizza, editing and Mussolini. In his head, most things



Marinetti's Futurist Manifesto had dodgy politics, but strip those out and you are left with ebullience, a childlike love of trains and fast cars

connect, and overshadow those that don't.

To say this is perhaps to think of cinema's greatest superconductor, Sergei Eisenstein. His brilliant idea of the spherical book, which is not only read front to back, but also has a Y-axis (up and down) and an X-axis (in and out) so that it can show how everything – art, music, politics, bodies, time, religion, anthropology, death, etc – is related to everything else, foresaw the hyperlink decades before it came to pass. Eisenstein's career is a tragedy because he had the inner speed of Frank Lloyd Wright, of Fassbinder or Godard, and when he worked he often did so at warp speed (*Battleship Potemkin* was edited in less than two weeks), but the institution of the Soviet Union and the shifting targets of his US-Mexico sojourn meant that he made relatively few films. (And at this point it is worth pointing to an even bigger tragedy. We have little way of knowing about the inner speeds of great African directors like Moufida Tlatli, Djibril Diop Mambéty and Haile Gerima because, like Eisenstein, they

were prevented from working at what could be called their natural rhythm. Since the late 1950s, the majority of African directors have had to endure long gaps between their films, and many don't get to make more than two.)

Industry, society, adrenaline, panic, intoxication: fast filmmaking has many causes. But then there's the little matter of joy. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's Futurist Manifesto had dodgy politics, but strip those out and you are left with, among other things, ebullience, a childlike love of trains and fast cars. This is interesting, I think. The fecundity of Winterbottom, Fassbinder or an actor like Tilda Swinton is akin to youthful excitement. They are confronted with form and meaning and take to them like Plasticine, like Lego. Add such inner things to more discussed, outer changes in the film world – miniaturisation, instantisation, globalisation, democratisation – and you get a speedball, a rollerball.

We work against the clock and live against the clock – a bigger clock – and, though it panics us, we sort of like measuring our days, our loves, our waistlines, our wisdom, our esteem, our hope, our ending, against it.

PS: As speed is our theme, I noted how long it took to write this article – 18 minutes to scribble a draft on the back of an envelope, 61 minutes to type it up and then refine it. A scan of the envelope can be viewed at bfi.org.uk/sightandsound

DEVELOPMENT TALE

JOE



Wrong side of the tracks: Tye Sheridan as Gary in David Gordon Green's *Joe*, an adaptation of a novel by Larry Brown

Gary Hawkins's efforts to get a film made from his adapted script about an ex-con befriending a teenage boy took ten years and an afternoon

By Charles Gant

David Gordon Green was a freshman at the University of North Carolina's film school when he boldly walked up to his professor, handing him a copy of Nick Cave's novel *And the Ass Saw the Angel*. "He said, 'Come on, let's go, this is our first one,'" Gary Hawkins recalls. "He wanted me to adapt it and he was going to direct it. I couldn't believe it. He was just a kid."

A few years later, Green showed his mettle when Hawkins was making a feature documentary about Larry Brown, the Mississippi-born author who had already led a rich and varied blue-collar life when he was first published in 1988 at the age of 37. Hawkins included dramatisations of three of Brown's short stories in the film, including 'Boy & Dog', which features Brown, Green, Hawkins himself and another of his students, Jeff Nichols (*Mud*), as firemen dealing with a Ford Mustang ablaze at the side of the road.

"It was 95 degrees," Hawkins says. "The turnout

[fireman] gear was a nightmare, we had people literally dropping in the heat. By day four, we were in bad shape. And then David wrapped on [his debut feature] *George Washington*, came straight to my set, put on turnout gear, and became my second AD. And he just brought all this life into the shoot at a time when it was critical. He was walking around saying, 'Guys come on, we are making a film. Don't you understand? This is a film. Come on, get up.' It was like we'd gone to war, and reinforcements had come at just the right time, but the reinforcements were all one guy."

Having finished *The Rough South of Larry Brown* in 2002, Hawkins's thoughts turned to *Joe*, Brown's semi-autobiographical novel about a homeless 15-year-old, Gary, trying to break free from his alcoholic drifter father, with the encouragement of the titular mentor who gives him work on his tree-poisoning crew in rural Mississippi. Having written a screenplay on spec, believing the film rights were becoming available, he discovered that they had been optioned again by Phil Walden, the former manager of Otis Redding and founder of Capricorn Records. Walden was setting up Capricorn Films and wanted to make *Joe* one of its first productions.

Says Hawkins, "I contacted Phil Walden, and I said, 'Look I've got a screenplay here and you

ought to look at mine before you proceed.' And they read my screenplay. 'Oh my God, it's a lot better than the one we had.' So they purchased it, and then a weird thing happened. I didn't get my final payment for the polish, so I called down to Macon, Georgia, where they were located, and found out that the president had suffered a stroke, and couldn't write or speak, and Phil Walden had died of a tumour in his brain. Their whole company was wiped out.

"At that point I just let *Joe* drop. I forgot all about it and went on to other things. Cut to ten years later, David Gordon Green forms Rough House Pictures. And when I saw the word 'Rough', thinking of my films *The Rough South of Harry Crews*, *The Rough South of Larry Brown*, and David and I of course go way back, I thought, 'OK, he's going to go this route for a while.' He said, 'What do you have?' I sent him *Joe*, and Green went crazy over it."

Green's agent at CAA talked up the script, and Nicolas Cage's agent down the hall got wind of it. His client had been looking for a strong dramatic piece, and he responded immediately. "Cage flew to Austin, Texas, and basically auditioned in person for *Joe* with David Green," Hawkins says. "And that's how it happened. So when people ask me how long it took to get *Joe* made, it was

ten years and an afternoon. The timing was very bad, and then the timing was very good.”

In truth, Hawkins had been attempting to get *Joe* made in the interim, but with no joy. “I did send *Joe* to certain producers, and everyone said, ‘That’s really a beautiful screenplay, it’s a real page-turner.’ And I said, ‘Are we going to make the movie?’ ‘No, no, I don’t see how we can make this film.’ Everyone passed on it. The way I’ve been trained, either a screenplay gets made or it sucks. I thought something was wrong with *Joe*, that there was something really, really wrong with it that I just didn’t see. And as it turned out, there wasn’t anything wrong with it, it just didn’t find the right people. The worst thing I heard from someone studio-related was, ‘This is a dirt-road movie. We don’t make dirt-road movies.’

“I actually sent *Joe* to Green for me to direct, but he said, ‘I can back you on this, but I can attract more money and people with my reputation.’ He was being blunt about it. He said, ‘If you’re going to hate yourself for letting go of it, don’t let go of it.’ That was his counsel to me, his former professor. ‘But if you will let go of it, I will make you a hell of a movie.’ And so I let go of it, and I’m glad I did. It was as if it was being set free, and it did what it wanted to do, it found all sorts of interesting people and got made.”

For the director, *Joe* was a case of the right project coming along at the right time. “I was editing [Jonah Hill comedy] *The Sitter* at the time,” Green explains. “When you’ve been making comedies or dramas, I always think

The worst thing I heard from someone studio-related was, ‘This is a dirt-road movie. We don’t make dirt-road movies’

about doing the other thing. When I’m doing *The Sitter*, I’m thinking of doing the exact opposite.” And following several studio pictures, including *Pineapple Express* and *Your Highness*, Green was discovering a different rhythm shooting HBO comedy *Eastbound & Down* with fellow North Carolina alumni Danny McBride, Jody Hill and Ben Best, which gave him time to take on indie film projects. “In the fall I like to put things together – *Prince Avalanche*, *Joe*, my new film *Manglehorn*, literally my TV hiatus jobs – because you can’t get into a big studio job for a year and a half when you’re doing a show. But you do have six months off when you can go and do something fun.”

Green had read Brown’s novels after meeting him shooting the *Boy & Dog* short, and “really loved the balance of brutality and tenderness that his writing achieved – it was always in my mind”. The director had even offered Brown a role in his second feature, *All the Real Girls* (starring yet another film-school friend, Paul Schneider), but the author was “too shy”. Explains Green, “I got real excited about the prospect of coming full circle from a guy who’d influenced me at the start of my career to making a movie of his most personal and arguably his best novel.”

i Joe is released on 25 July and is reviewed on page 78

THE NUMBERS SLOW SUMMER

By Charles Gant

The early exit of England from the Fifa World Cup may have been a relief to the nation’s film exhibitors, who hoped that the audience’s attention would return to their cinematic offerings, but overall good news has been in short supply this summer. As Picturehouse Cinemas’ chief booker Clare Binns aptly puts it, “The main problem is no one’s releasing anything. It’s a very tough time for cinemas, not only with the football and the weather, but also the lack of movies.”

After the glut of the awards season and what is usually a reasonably healthy spring, summer is traditionally a slow period for the arthouse sector, before stronger titles arrive in the autumn. But last year saw *The Great Gatsby* (playing multiplexes and independents, grossing £15.74 million) in May, a month that also saw a Pedro Almodóvar film (*I’m So Excited!*, £848,000) and *Mud* (£860,000). The standout title in June last year was *Behind the Candelabra*, grossing £3.53 million.

This year, there hasn’t been a big hit for the sector since March’s *The Grand Budapest Hotel* delivered an astonishing £11.07 million. May offered *The Two Faces of January* (see chart, below), which did reasonably well, but couldn’t sustain momentum at an initial release of 224 cinemas. *Frank* was also too wide – opening with a weak screen average of £1,389 – as was *Fading Gigolo*, averaging £1,340 for its debut frame. Worse was to come.

“*Jimmy’s Hall* has underperformed badly,” Binns says. “*Omar* disappeared without trace. *Grace of Monaco*, we played it in a couple of places, knowing it wouldn’t work, but there wasn’t anything else to play.” As for well-regarded US indie *Fruitvale Station*, “You couldn’t really sell it on any buzz that it had when it was in Sundance [17 months before its UK release]. And [Jean-Pierre Jeunet’s *The Young and Prodigious T.S. Spivet* was a disaster, which is terrible. I loved the film. The problem with *Spivet* was that it was sold as a kids’ movie, and the reviews were pretty dire.”



Gugu Mbatha-Raw in *Belle*

Amma Asante’s *Belle*, with more than £1 million in ten days, proved the best of the bunch in June, but Fox’s rollout on more than 400 screens was optimistic. Says Binns, “*Belle* probably went too wide. For us, if that had gone out on 60-80 screens, we would have doubled our screen average. It was still our best-performing film in general. It was the only one that worked.”

While Binns has hopes for some of the titles arriving as the World Cup draws to its close, such as Richard Linklater’s *Boyhood* and John Carney’s *Begin Again*, once again it is the thriving sector of live-event cinema that is providing the greatest cheer. “The big one that’s coming up is the Monty Python [live show at the O2 arena on 20 July], which we’re distributing,” she says. “We are releasing around the world on 2,000 screens. It is phenomenal. We could sell that out in every single screen we have, but we are limiting it to two screens per cinema. We have to offer our customers a choice.”

MAY/JUNE 2014 TITLES AT THE UK BOX OFFICE

Film	Release date	Gross
The Two Faces of January	16 May	£1,519,621
Belle	13 June	£1,047,694
The Wind Rises	9 May	£696,766
Grace of Monaco	6 June	£647,770
Fading Gigolo	23 May	£522,722
Frank	9 May	£505,781
Jimmy’s Hall	30 May	£462,591
Blue Ruin	2 May	£317,607
Devil’s Knot	13 June	£239,838
Before the Winter Chill	9 May	£94,584

All grosses to 22 June. Excludes commercial mainstream titles.

DIVERSITY REVISITED

BFI FILM FUND INSIGHTS

For years, the film industry has been talking about increasing diversity. Now maybe something is finally going to change



By Ben Roberts

Late last year I wrote about a renewed urgency in the industry-wide conversation about diversity: a decades-long call for action

that, despite good intentions, has been notable mostly for abandoned schemes and the white noise of debate. Much of the credit for the recent and sustained pressure for action should go to Lenny Henry, who has joined with Ed Vaizey, the minister for culture, communications and the creative industries, to focus government attention on the continued lack of diversity within the screen industries, on and off screen.

In January, Vaizey invited some film and TV folk to a round table at the House of Commons where we were asked how we planned to tackle the myriad issues around diversity, and dispatched with a mandate to do more, talk less. This month, we are due to regroup and update on promised activity.

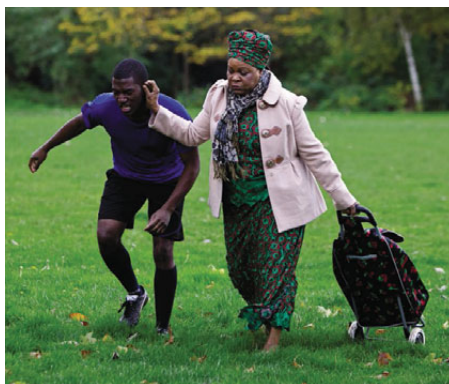
To date, the diversity conversation has focused on broadcasters, especially the BBC. No surprise, then, when director-general Tony Hall recently made a major commitment to increase onscreen representation at the BBC and to fast-track new work from BAME (black, Asian, minority ethnic) writers. As commissioners, producers and operators of platforms, the broadcasters are in plain view; the independent film industry – by presenting itself as a less financially fluid, more chaotic community – could argue that it hasn't been able to organise itself around diversity ambitions.

The BFI Film Fund would be shirking our responsibility if we subscribed to that. As the Lottery distributor for film, we hold a significant lever on recipients of production funding, and this can extend to development, distribution, exhibition, education and so on.

Deciding how to use this power, however, hasn't been straightforward. In looking at how we oblige funded productions to think seriously about diversity, we considered a number of approaches. At one extreme it could have meant applying punitive charges to productions that didn't come up to scratch – but this idea, apart from being aggressive, would have made our production finance agreement hard to bank. At the other extreme we decided a pledge was probably too soft – similar pledges in the past have not changed the game.

Eventually, we settled on a set of guidelines

We decided a pledge on diversity was probably too soft – similar pledges in the past have not changed the game



Destiny Ekaragha's *Gone Too Far!*

that recipients of Lottery funding will need to comply with. Using the BFI certification unit (which is responsible for qualifying productions for UK film tax relief by way of the Cultural Test), we came up with the concept of a grid of criteria against which projects seeking production support must self-assess. Allowing some flexibility in assessment, productions would be able to mark themselves in ten sections covering three areas: 'onscreen diversity', 'offscreen diversity' and 'creating opportunities'. They would have to demonstrate diversity in at least two areas before we could present a project for approval at our weekly Lottery Finance Committee. A diversity expert, yet to be recruited, will help us and the productions to achieve best results. Projects that demonstrate diversity in three or more areas will be heralded as 'three-tick' productions and carry a kitemark for all the world to see. Each year, an exemplary three-tick producer will be given an award to help them create an opening or opportunity for someone from a minority background.

So far so good; but the devil is in the detail. Early discussions with PACT steered us away from potentially negative language such as 'test' and 'points'. We took the guidelines to our board three times over three months before we reached a consensus, and in that time produced 18 versions. A sub-group of governors finalised the detail. Determining the right stretch targets around women, BAME, disabled and LGBT filmmakers; agreeing on how to measure 'social disadvantage'; balancing the value of training and entry-level opportunities against progression; minimum requirements around onscreen representation...

Eventually, we reached a point where further iterations wouldn't take us any further forward. We now have guidelines that we are comfortable putting into practice, and over the summer we'll be introducing them to producers, filmmakers, BECTU and the Production Guild before we implement them in September. We'll run them for a year, then check that we've set the right levels. Ideally, at that point our funding peers will adopt them as industry-wide measures.

The Film Fund also has to think about the range of filmmakers we support, and development of audiences and distribution to ensure a healthy appetite for more diverse material, among other things. But hopefully this is a significant step in the right direction. [@bfiben](#)

IN PRODUCTION

● **Zhang Yimou's** next project will be a US-China co-production entitled *The Great Wall*. Plot details are undisclosed, but it will be an epic-scale English-language fantasy with a largely international cast. Edward Zwick was down to direct, but dropped out in March.

"This is not a small-scale film made to win awards at film festivals," Zhang has said, "We need to explore and express Chinese culture in deep but simple ways to get through to the young audience. You can't expect too much."

● **Alejandro Amenábar** has completed shooting on *Regression*, his follow-up to 2009's largely overlooked *Agora*. Emma Watson stars as a young woman who accuses her amnesiac father (David Dencik) of abusing her. Ethan Hawke plays the detective investigating the case, and David Thewlis is the psychologist tasked with helping the father remember.

● **Kore-eda Hirokazu** will follow the success of *Like Father, Like Son* with *Kamakura Diary*, based on a bestselling comic by Yoshida Akimi, about the lives of four sisters in the title city. Nagasawa Masami, Ayase Haruka, Kaho and Hirose Suzu are lined up to star. Release is scheduled for summer 2015.

● **Andrew Bujalski**, 'mumblecore' poster-boy and director of the acclaimed *Computer Chess*, has reportedly cast Guy Pearce, Cobie Smulders, Giovanni Ribisi and Anthony Michael Hall in *Results*, which begins shooting this month. A Craigslist ad for extras says the story revolves around "Kat and Trevor, personal trainers, and what happens when out-of-shape and newly wealthy Danny enters their lives".

● **Michael Haneke** is "waiting in line" for his chosen actress to be available for his next feature *Flashmob*. Production was to begin this summer, but at a recent masterclass in Copenhagen, Haneke revealed that the dates had moved back, because of the unnamed actress and because he had not decided on his aesthetic approach. The film follows various characters who connect through the internet, and then in real life. "I often say too much about the future of my projects, and I've never managed to keep my promises in advance," Haneke apparently added.

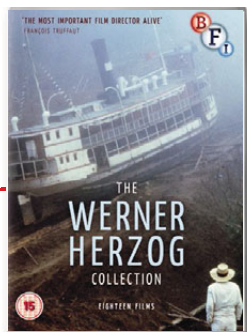
● **Wong Kar Wai** (below) is to adapt a story from author Zhang Jiajia's bestselling collection *I Belonged to You*. Called 'Ferryman', the story is about an affair between a girl and a married artist in Changchun. The cast is yet to be announced, but shooting is said to be beginning "soon".



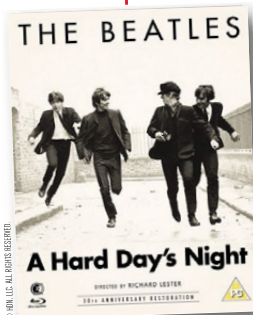
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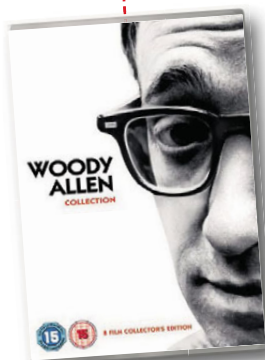
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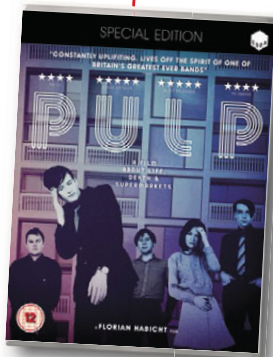
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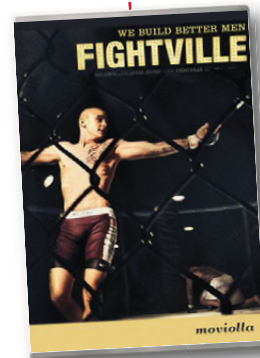
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THE LAST PICTURE SHOWS

In London, soaring property prices and shrinking funding mean bleak times for fans of film beyond the mainstream

By **Fatema Ahmed**

In a city being transformed by austerity and property developers, two unique London film venues – Riverside Studios in Hammersmith and the Horse Hospital in Bloomsbury – are under threat or about to change beyond all recognition.

In May the owners of The Horse Hospital announced that they were putting one of London's last genuinely counter-cultural arts spaces up for sale for £2.5 million. This was a particularly cruel blow after last year's celebration of the venue's 20th birthday, with a programme supported for the first time by a one-off grant from the Arts Council. Founded in 1993 by the costume collector, designer and filmmaker Roger K. Burton, The Horse Hospital has specialised in showing avant-garde and underground film, as well as six or seven art exhibitions a year by cult outsider artists like Joe Coleman. In addition to its own programming, shaped in its early days by Ian White, it has maintained a rare open door policy for filmmakers and curators to show films and follow their interests, often at short notice. The artist Tai Shani, who has run the film programme with Burton for the last nine years, says: "We're always open if it's within our identity." In October 2012, for instance, less than three months after Chris Marker's death, curator Gareth Evans and critic Chris Darke paid tribute by showing 12 hours of his films in a day. The Horse Hospital used to be even more free-wheeling – until 2008, when it screened Robert Hendrickson and Laurence Merrick's 1973 documentary about Charles Manson without getting advance permission. The venue has always been happy to do a door split with rights holders who have contacted it after the event, but the *Manson* incident was, Shani says, "a real lesson for us". The Scala Cinema Club at Kings Cross has been a long-running inspiration to Burton and his team, but they are less keen to emulate its terminal troubles with Stanley Kubrick: thanks to an unauthorised screening of *A Clockwork Orange*, the Scala went bust the year The Horse Hospital opened.

Burton's own story is a window on to a vanished London scene – after running vintage clothes shops in Leicester Square and Portobello Road, he provided costumes for *Quadrophenia* (1979) before moving into music videos. He came across the derelict two-storey 18th-century stables in the early 90s as a place to store his collection of clothes. The first exhibition there was devoted to Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood, at a time when no one could have imagined the V&A trying, as it did last year, to recreate The Blitz Club in a corner of its galleries. Hiring out Burton's costumes for film and television funds The Horse Hospital's defiantly uncommercial programme. The venue's pricing policy reflects its origins in alternative London: after the 2008 crash it cut prices. The Horse Hospital is in negotiations with its landlord, and understandably reluctant to talk about what the future may hold. Its



End of an era: the counter-cultural arts space The Horse Hospital is facing closure

listing as a community asset (a move that has kept a number of pubs out of the clutches of property developers) is more than likely.

Riverside Studios has had more say in its future. In August the venue will close and the building will be knocked down, to reappear in 2017 as a 'mixed-use' development of 165 very expensive flats alongside new production facilities and two cinema screens. For three years, Londoners will be without its rare programming of double bills throughout the week. Shira MacLeod, the cinema programmer, describes her approach in slightly misleading but wonderfully pragmatic terms: "I could create some kind of mystique and say it's all deep and meaningful but... it's an attempt to make a double bill make money." Her practice of pairing an old film with newer releases can be seen in the choices in this final month, such as *The Draughtsman's Contract* (which she calls "a real Riverside film"); *Annie Hall* is another alongside *Belle*. In the 11 years MacLeod has been running the cinema (since she took over from Ed Lewis, the Riverside Cinema's founder), she has been particularly supportive of Italian and Central and East European film. She has developed a close relationship with Second Run DVD, allowing it to present a programme every couple of months. With physical shops where you can walk in and buy DVDs disappearing, Second Run's founder Mehelli Modi says that screenings are more vital

Very few people would consider cinema a bit outside the mainstream and give you this spot to do whatever you wanted

than ever: "There are very few people who would consider cinema a bit outside the mainstream and give you this spot to do whatever you wanted, and they did it for many years." The Riverside says that it will continue to be an arthouse cinema when it reopens, but until then there will be a real gap; and its new home will be a mediocre building with none of the charm of the former water-pump factory it's in now. Still, the loss in 2011 of all of its Arts Council funding (£500,000) leaves it with few options (and no way of refurbishing a building that certainly needs it). Kim Acland, the Riverside's business director, says that staff will soon be made redundant, but can't yet say who or how many, or give any details of the hoped-for interim programming.

But as the future of repertory cinema looks uncertain in central and west London, there are signs of activity in the east. I visited the future site of Close-Up's cinema, on Sclater Street off Brick Lane, the day they took delivery of two 35mm-projectors. They're currently sitting outside the 40-seater screening room and while the building still needs a lot of work (for which a Kickstarter campaign has just closed), Damien Sanville of Close-Up is optimistic. The existing film library, a new café and a supportive landlord mean that they'll be able to show longer runs of films – "What's happening in London is that you can have an amazing programme at the Tate or at the BFI or the ICA and it's going to be a very short run." And he's adamant, like everyone else who thinks that cinema is a necessity, "that the audience will be defined by how cheap the ticket is" and they'll be able to keep prices down: "If we're not losing money, then we're fine." It's a modest aim, bordering on the heroic these days. ⑤

SHEFFIELD DOC/FEST

STRETCHING THE FACTS



Two thumbs up: Steve James's warm, funny portrait of the late, great American film critic Roger Ebert, *Life Itself*

Nonfiction movie culture is booming, and Sheffield Doc/Fest with it. But can the festival stay on the sharp edge of the art?

By Nick Bradshaw

What use film festivals in an age of media ubiquity? The selling points tend to be exclusive premieres, expert curation or the lure of live events and community – and on this last, Sheffield Doc/Fest, in its 21st year, continues to set the pace. When I first visited in 2008, the festival drew a huddled cadre of attendees to a most-often rainy South Yorkshire in November for five days of screenings and talking shops that felt mostly ruled by the forces of British TV. It's both grown and evolved since then, thanks to a happy combination of prevailing winds in documentary and the festival's own initiatives. For one thing, the festival's MeetMarket pitching forums are clearly on a roll – previous projects bankrolled here include *Searching for Sugar Man*, *The Act of Killing* and *5 Broken Cameras* – such that the flavour of industry delegates pilgrimaging to Sheffield has become markedly more international; numbers have risen from 500 to more than 3,000, and the buzz of trans-Atlantic

Doc/Fest meet-and-greeting followed me up from the BFI's new London restaurant space and via a busy Sunday train carriage.

For another, audiences seem enthused – up here from 2,000 to 20,000 – perhaps because the mass media has driven them in search of the authentic and complex, perhaps because they've caught the excitement of documentary filmmakers driven to improvise and innovate. Dogwoof, the UK's doc-specialist distributors, marked its own tenth anniversary with a blow-out bash at Doc/Fest, and at its end the festival announced an initiative to bring year-round Doc/Fest programming to Cineworld cinemas in the domain of the BFI's Film Hub North network. (London audiences simultaneously heard news of a permanent DocHouse screen to come in the remodelled Curzon Bloomsbury miniplex, adding to the provision of the Frontline Club in the capital, and no doubt aiming to replicate the success of the doc-only Bloor Cinema, an extension of Toronto's Hot Docs festival, in showcasing Canadians' 'national art form'.)

Having switched to a sunnier June berth in 2011, Doc/Fest's further moves to ride the tide have included, in 2012, the commencement of an ongoing series of archive co-productions matching a filmmaker with big-ticket musicians, premiering at the festival with live soundtrack

performances (originally Penny Woolcock's *From the Sea to the Land Beyond*: see 'The Future is Behind You', *S&S*, July 2012 and online), and last year the use of rural Yorkshire landmark the Peak Cavern, aka the 'Devil's Arse', for an 'event' screening of an adventure doc (mountaineering-calamity retreader *The Summit*).

This year the festival ramped up both trends, with four sessions at the Arse (from Herzog's *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* to Thomas Balmès's *Happiness*, a picturesque down-from-the-mountain fable of Bhutanese villagers turning from the world of the monastery to television), and a switch to a Saturday start to encompass a second weekend of post-'official'



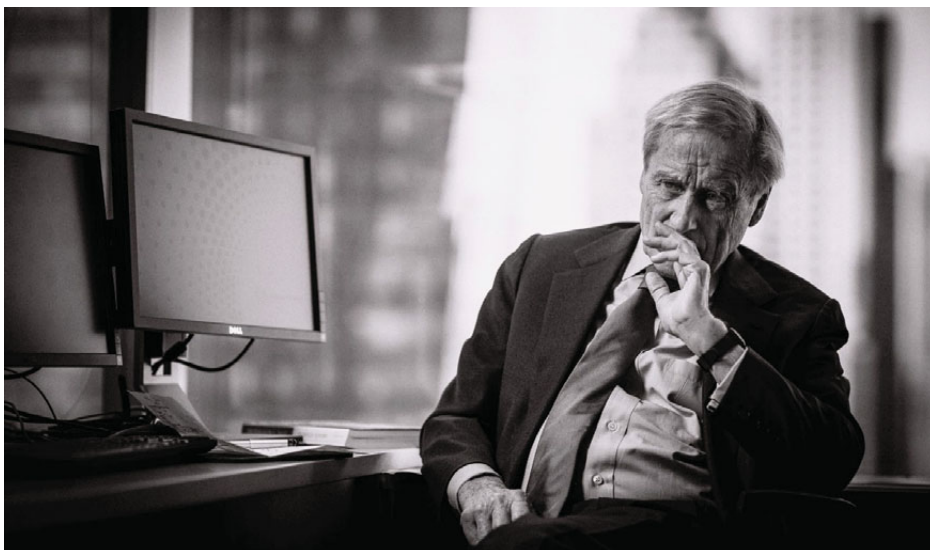
Regarding Susan Sontag

festival live events. Top billing was probably Doc/Fest's latest archive-raid commission, Kim Longinotto's *Love Is All*, unveiled in a big-top tent in the rolling, sheep-speckled grounds of heritage manor Chatsworth House. Set to a medley of luxuriant love songs by local rocker Richard Hawley (sadly not live, though Hawley did make a nuisance of himself during Longinotto's Q&A), this was the most vivacious and exuberant of these Brit-film mashups yet, structured less around chronology or even social history than around a kind of rejoicing in the diversity of both acts of love and acts of cinema.

Last year's equivalent special, Martin Herbert's Steel City homage *The Big Melt*, had dialled up Sheffield's prodigal son Jarvis Cocker for its soundtrack; this year the festival opened with *Pulp: A Film About Life, Death & Supermarkets*, preceded by a choir singing 'Common People' on the steps of the City Hall. Saint Etienne closed out proceedings five days later with a performance of their soundtrack to Paul Kelly's new London-archive doc *How We Used to Live*, and in the middle of the festival Summer Camp played a dreamy-dirgey accompaniment to *Beyond Clueless*, multimedia critic Charlie Lyne's meta-movie disquisition on the apparently bottomless well of millennial American teen flicks. I feel slightly crusty in wanting to complain that, as a newcomer to many of the sources, I couldn't hear all their words under the sounds of the gig, and also have quibbles with the film's assumed terms of reference (why these years? Why American?) and ambiguous mode of address (is this a newbie's guide? Celebration? Anthropological investigation? Why does Fairuza Balk's voiceover reading have to be too cool for school?). But whatever, the film's montages of the genre's story-beat clichés, from locker-room gauntlet to popping the cherry, are great acts of exegesis, and there are acute readings of much latter-day popcorn fodder.

Any festival programme throws up a semi-conscious mashup of strange rhymes and echoes. This year's repeat notes spanned Martin Scorsese, doper cyclists, oppressed miners, thalidomide victims, Alabama's 16th Street Baptist Church bombing and Nazi war crimes – but for me, questions of cultural commentary high and low inspired some of the richest movies. My best day's screenings brought a chance double bill of two American writer portraits, Steve James's Roger Ebert tribute *Life Itself* and Nancy Kates's *Regarding Susan Sontag*. To start at the most granular level: Patricia Clarkson's readings of Sontag's writing showed up the flatness of most other voiceovers in the festival, with the exception of voice actor and impressionist Stephen Stanton's lovely Ebert rendition. And I could watch James's talking heads for days, while Kates's movie drew out just how knowing and expressive a photographic subject was the author of *On Photography*.

Kates had been working on her doc for most of the decade since Sontag's death, without the approval of Sontag's son David, but with the involvement of many of her friends and lovers (Kates talked after the screening about helping several through their "Post-Sontag stress disorder"); movingly, James's film was made on the cusp of Ebert's death from cancer, and shows us the man glint-eyed and eager in his hospital



Winning formula: *Attacking the Devil: Harold Evans and the Last Nazi War Crime*

bed, sans jaw or voice, wise-cracking through a computer and asserting co-ownership of the project. Both films are deftly and resonantly woven across the frameworks of their subjects' venturesome lives: Ebert's three great acts (*pace* his beloved *Gatsby*), across print, television and the internet; Sontag's many bifurcations, of residence, sexuality, literary ambition and perhaps even self-image. James's doc is warmly funny, from the rich outtakes of Siskel and Ebert backbiting to Scorsese's furrow-browed appreciation of how Russ Meyer's Ebert-scripted *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* went over his head. Kates's has its tongue-in-cheek moments (Sontag had her own filmmaking misadventures – of French and Swedish shades, natch), but it uncovers more tragic notes in its humanisation of its hero. For all their formidable survival skills, their regard of death couldn't be more distinct: for one it's "a part of life"; for the other, "the opposite of everything".

In further adventures of the inky-handed, Scorsese himself introduced (via Skype) his co-directed celebration of the *New York Review of Books*, *The 50 Year Argument*, which will have screened on BBC Four by the time you read this. But the jury, led by esteemed

S&S contributor Mark Cousins, surprised and slightly disappointed me with its main award to Jacqui and David Morris's *Attacking the Devil: Harold Evans and the Last Nazi War Crime*. This not untimely account of *Sunday Times* editor Harold Evans's heroic campaign for justice for Britain's thalidomide victims is incontrovertibly fascinating, with jaw-dropping revelations about the drug's origins. (These duly dovetailed with André Singer's *Night Will Fall*, about producer Sidney Bernstein's grand vision for the footage shot by Allied soldier cameramen as they liberated the Holocaust camps of Nazi Germany.) But *Attacking the Devil* seemed torn and awkward in its ambitions – as betokened by that long title – and prosaic in its execution.

Next month S&S will be running a documentary special issue, with more space to bat about these questions of journalism and art, fact and movies. It'll also feature a major poll we've conducted of the documentary great and good, with all the hidden gems that entails, and not only Wang Bing's *West of the Tracks* (which took a decade to be given a screening in the UK). Doc/Fest is our leading documentary fest, and we need it to lead us beyond the Anglophone ails of documentary-as-information-delivery-mechanism, of tinned history and self-righteous point-proving, to the supplest understanding and use of the art. No doubt the anti-Bush/Blair-march-to-war crowd-pleaser *We Are Many* warranted inclusion for being British, competent and salutary, but it cried out for the cinematic rejoinder of Victor Kossakovsky's Barcelona protest ballet *Demonstration* (which did screen at London's Open City Docs Fest). No doubt Doc/Fest knows its audience better than I do – and any festival that brings us quiet but indelible marvels like *Planet of Snail* or *Phnom Penh Lullaby* (both 2011) can hardly be accused of parochialism. But we need to see more. 

 **Love Is All and Beyond Clueless (with its live accompaniment by Summer Camp) will be screened at Latitude 2014, from 17-20 July. Night Will Fall is released on 19 September. More Doc/Fest reports are online at bfi.org.uk/sightandsound**

We need Doc/Fest to lead us beyond the Anglophone ails of documentary-as-information-delivery mechanism



A scene from *Brick Lane* in *Love Is All*

RICHARD LINKLATER

The acclaimed director of the *Before* trilogy discusses the genesis and evolution of his self-proclaimed 'indie epic' *Boyhood*, which was filmed over 12 years in order to capture the growing pains of its protagonist from childhood through to college. Here he explains the unique challenges of the shoot, why he is wary of nostalgia and why he believes that the process of filmmaking is more important than the end result. **Interview by Ryan Gilbey**

Time has been the leading character in many of Richard Linklater's 18 features to date. He has made films confined to a single day or night (*Slacker*, *Dazed and Confused*, *Suburbia*), others that take place entirely in real time (*Tape*) and a trilogy (*Before Sunrise*, *Before Sunset* and *Before Midnight*) that features examples of both those time-frames. The *Before* films had always been considered the crowning glory of Linklater's career, an evocative narrative experiment that dropped anchor at nine-year intervals in the lives of its protagonists (Céline and Jesse, a young couple whose romance flourished after a chance meeting on a train). Those pictures also represented the closest cinema had come to replicating the emotional effect of Michael Apted's seven-yearly *...Up* series of documentaries, which enable audiences to witness the passage of time on screen. The closest until now, that is.

Linklater has reached full maturity with *Boyhood*. Since 2002, he has been beaver away for a few days each year shooting pieces of this film, an apparent side project that has now emerged from the margins to become his defining achievement. The concept is simplicity itself: it follows Mason Jr (Ellar Coltrane) from the beginnings of his school life at the age of six to his arrival at college 12 years later. On the surface, nothing dramatic occurs. There are the usual emotional attachments and estrangements and rites of passage; the family moves house several times; shifts in the political landscape are glimpsed in passing; ambitions flourish and minor resentments fester. Although Linklater always knew where the film was heading, he shaped the screenplay according to his actors, modulating some of the details of the movie to correspond to their lives. As Coltrane began showing an interest in photography, for example, that influenced Mason's own artistic ambitions in the movie.

Despite the absence of earth-shattering drama, the film has quite a kick: its power and depth are cumulative. Using the same actors over the entire 12-year production (among them Patricia Arquette and Ethan Hawke as Mason's parents,

and Linklater's own daughter Lorelei as his older sister), the movie elegantly compresses Mason's young life into just under three hours of screen time. One YouTube viewer missed the point spectacularly in a comment left beneath the film's trailer: "I really don't get what's so significant about this. They made a 12-year production of a movie that could have easily been shot in a few months just so they could use the same actor. That's just stupid." The picture's uniqueness is only enhanced by that delightful misreading.

The past 12 months have been eventful for Linklater. After finishing *Boyhood* late last year, he took it to the Berlin film festival in February, where it won him the Silver Bear for Best Director. His personal life blurred into his artistic one when Bernie Tiede, played by Jack Black in Linklater's homespun 2011 comedy *Bernie*, was released from prison early on the

unusual condition that he come to live in the apartment above the director's garage. (Tiede, a mortician, had been imprisoned for the murder of Marjorie Nugent, the wealthy widow played in the film by Shirley MacLaine. Sympathetic evidence which later came to light persuaded a judge to reduce his life sentence.) He also has other projects on the boil, including a 1980s-set spiritual cousin to *Dazed and Confused*, and continues to be an active participant in the Austin Film Society, which he founded, and at which he appears regularly to present screenings. It was *Boyhood*, though, that inevitably dominated our conversation when he visited London last month.

Ryan Gilbey: Did you think a lot about the *Seven Up!* television series while making *Boyhood*? It's the most obvious precursor.

Richard Linklater: Not while making it, but yeah, on a conceptual level it's hard not to have it in mind as a record of how powerful time is. The Antoine Doinel films [by François Truffaut] I was thinking about too. But *Seven Up!* is there always as the peak for dealing with time on film. The narrative structure of *Boyhood* really came out of thinking how to solve a problem, how to tell the story of childhood. All my ideas were so dispersed over the years; I didn't have my *400 Blows*. I sort of do now.

RG: Lindsay Anderson's *Mick Travis* trilogy [*If....*, *O Lucky Man!* and *Britannia Hospital*] is another example. You were friends with Anderson weren't you?

RL: Ah, the Mick Travis trilogy. Yes, Lindsay and I were friends. Twenty years ago this summer he died. I was sitting in the editing room cutting *Before Sunrise* when I heard. I'd had dinner with him here in London about four weeks earlier.

RG: How did that friendship come about?

RL: He'd visited Houston in the early 90s. He was teaching there for a couple of weeks, presenting some films, his beloved John Ford movies, and there was a little retrospective of his own work too. A girl I was dating worked for one of the organisations that was bringing him in, so we went to get him from the airport, then went to the hotel and had a few drinks. He was

ON RICHARD LINKLATER

'With his first four or five films you may have thought you had Rick pegged and you would have been wrong... He's done it very quietly, one step at a time.'

Quentin Tarantino, the 'New Yorker'

'Directors are interested in "If you turn a little to the left, your nose catches the light in a great way." Rick would puke if anybody said that on his set. Like, "What are we doing – an ad? We're playing human beings here."'

Ethan Hawke, the 'New Yorker'

'Rick was born in the wrong era of studio filmmaking. His amazing versatility and unassuming authorial voice are qualities that would have made him perfectly suited for 30s and 40s Hollywood.'

Gabe Klinger, 'Double Play' director



PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERHARD KASSNER

such a great talker. He'd ask you, "What are your politics?" I knew his films, and he asked me what my favourite John Ford film was. You're supposed to say *The Searchers*, but I'd just seen *They Were Expendable* so I mentioned that and he said, "A marvellous film!" He took an interest in me and we wrote to one another. Whenever I was here, we would spend some time together.

RG: Did he see your work?

RL: Yeah. He saw *Dazed and Confused*. I don't know if he ever gave me much direct feedback. He congratulated me and he knew it had got good reviews and such. He said, "You really will be the next Ron Howard, won't you?" [Laughs loudly.] He didn't really mean that; in fact, I don't know what he meant by it. I don't think he really meant it the way it might sound to us now. Look, the dude was in his 70s, he was struggling to get his films made. He told me all about *Is That All There Is?* [Anderson's last film, a 52-minute documentary essay shown in 1995]. That first summer when he was in Texas, I'd shown him *Slacker* [1991]; he sat down and really talked to me about it. He said, "What if I told you that film is going to get distribution?" It kept being rejected by film festivals but Lindsay saw it early and was incredibly supportive and encouraging about it. Ultimately it had Butthole Surfers playing over the end credits but at that stage it had 'Is That All There Is?', which Lindsay has Alan Price playing in the film, and which eventually gave his film its title. So when I saw that after he died and the song came up, I was, like, "Lindsay, that's great!"

RG: There was another Free Cinema connection when you cast the cinematographer Walter Lassally as the elderly writer in *Before Midnight*.

RL: Yeah, how about that? We talked a bit about Lindsay. Good old Walter. I wanted a guy who, pushing 90 or whatever he was, still kinda carried himself in a certain way. You know, Walter is very much like, "I won an Oscar. I'm a badass!" That's what I wanted. A guy who had kind of won in his view of life. Walter had never acted. You sort of feel, "Oh everyone can act!" But Walter was kinda difficult [laughs]. 'Cos, you know, he thought he should really be shooting the movie. He'd be all like, "Well, gosh, on *Zorba the Greek* we did it differently..." We shot *Before Midnight* in 15 fucking days! And still he thought this modern cinema was just wasting time. "I don't know if you noticed, Walter, but we shot nine pages today. What was your rate like on *Zorba*?" His attitude was, "You just do a master, some close-ups and you're done." But we were working fast. That was just the funny kind of rapport we fell into.

RG: There's a *Before*-style shot in *Boyhood*, when Mason and the girl with the bicycle are walking down the alley. As they're talking, you can see the background receding. You can see how far they've come.

RL: Oh yeah, I guess so. I like that scene. "Are you going to the party? This girl's got a crush on you" – all that sort of thing. Then shortly thereafter you've got the older high-school boys and you see the difference in the way they're talking about relationships. I remember that contrast. Young girls don't know how bad those good boys are talking about them.

RG: For a film called *Boyhood* there's a lot about girlhood.

RL: Sure. It could have been called *Parenthood* too.

RG: Then you'd really be Ron Howard.

RL: Yeah! A lot of those titles were taken: *Ordinary People*, that one was gone. There seemed to be a lot of titles that would have fitted. We had *Growing Up* for a while, but that just seemed too vague.

RG: Does the idea for *Boyhood* predate the *Before* trilogy?

RL: It obviously predates *Before Sunset*.

Committing to this 12-year project in 2001 kind of informed Ethan [Hawke] and myself both agreeing to revisit Jesse and Céline. They're sort of opposite projects to *Boyhood* though. One has nine-year gaps in real time, the other is more sort of incremental, but they're both time narratives in different ways.

RG: What did you see in Ellar Coltrane when he was six?

RL: I liked the way his mind worked. I met some kids who were more people-pleasing. They were normal, they were gonna be good, they'd been conditioned in some way. He seemed like his own guy even at that stage. He was seven when we started shooting. He wasn't reading at that point. You'd think he would be this prodigy; he wasn't like that at all. He was thinking, though. He had this aura about him. He's still that same guy. Ethereal, mysterious. I just thought, "Well I'm gonna bet on that."

RG: In casting Ellar, what were your concerns about his future wellbeing?

RL: His parents are artists and I wanted to make this a positive thing in his life, and I thought they would appreciate that. Something to look forward to. There was never any of the bad stuff. A young kid in a film – that can kind of screw up the kid's life, the way other people around you

change. Ethan had that. He was in *Explorers* [1985] as a kid. And he had that experience. Everyone was like, "This is going to be the next *ET*." And when it wasn't, he experienced as a 13-year-old all the adults around him being let down. What a weird feeling – to be made to feel you've failed. And he never looked at it like that because he had a good time making it. So on *Boyhood*, he would say to Ellar: "You're getting the good part. Don't forget. You don't have the kid who wants to beat you up at school because you think you're so cool for being in a movie. You don't have that because no one's seeing what we're doing yet." It's a lot to lay on a kid. Lorelei [Linklater] too. I felt it was positive that at least when the film finally came out, they would be young adults.

RG: That was a worry on *School of Rock* [2003], wasn't it? You told me that you wrote a letter to the children in the cast after the film was released.

RL: I just wanted to remind them that it had been great and that I wasn't encouraging them to pursue acting – that just because it had been a good chapter in their lives, don't make it be the best chapter. Movies stay with you. I see them as positive moments in time. I always think of them more for the experience than the finished thing.

RG: It's interesting that you gave those children that advice. *Boyhood* is full of adults giving unsolicited advice to Mason, or imposing their perspective on him.

RL: Everyone is sort of in your face all the time with advice when you're a kid. I guess it's the job of adults in relation to younger people; it's the social contract. I try not to do it too much. I remember as a young person going, "All these people are advising me to do this or that. And do I want to be any of these people? No. So I'm gonna do the opposite of what they're saying." It's kinda comical.

RG: *Boyhood* is almost anti-nostalgic. It reminded me of Pink's line from *Dazed and Confused*: "If I ever start referring to these as the best years of my life, remind me to kill myself!"

Nostalgia is there naturally when you're dealing with the past. It doesn't need to come with plaintive strings



The child in time: Ellar Coltrane as Mason, aged six, with his mother, played by Patricia Arquette



Mason, aged nine

RL: I didn't want it to be too nostalgic. We bring enough of that stuff with us anyway – nostalgia is there naturally when you're dealing with the past. It doesn't need to come with plaintive strings. I like showing the rougher edges of it. It's not all fun. As a child, you don't have agency, you're being whisked along by adults. I tried to capture that feeling I had when I was a kid.

RG: *Dazed and Confused* is often misremembered or misread as a nostalgic film.

RL: I had really mixed feelings about those years of my life. I tried to recreate it, but I didn't even know how I felt about it. I wasn't saying the 1970s were great. It was more like, "Yeah, those years were kinda shitty actually!" I was revisiting a lot of not-so-great stuff. You can do it either way.

RG: Talking of doing it either way, it's easy to imagine how *Boyhood* could have gone wrong. You resist the temptation at the end to have a montage recapping how Mason has changed.

RL: Awww! Well, with every movie you make it's good to define yourselves against this hypothetical bad movie in parallel. So, yeah, what you just described would have been something you could do. And that same movie features a lotta things you could have done: you could have the music swelling as they kiss for the first time, for example.

RG: What was your rationale behind the songs you chose? I know some people groan when Coldplay's 'Yellow' is the first thing we hear, but it works as a song that everyone knew around that time, doesn't it?

RL: They're tied to approximate times, though the Coldplay one – which I really like! – came out a little before that. They're usually from some character's perspective: what the dad or mum would be listening to. Then as Mason grows up it becomes what he would listen to, or what might be playing at parties. I'm not so familiar with the music from this era, so I would ask my young interns on this because they were closer in age to Mason. Ellar and Lorelei weren't much help. I'd ask Ellar what he was listening to, what would a nine-year-old like – "What's your favourite group?" But he was so far beyond his peer group, his answer would always be Radiohead or Pink Floyd. "Isn't there some poppy stuff that you think is cool?" "Um, no." Lorelei is listening to, like, harpsichord music. She's in a different century, so she's no help. As they got older, it became easier – Arcade Fire or whatever. I thought there'd be more score, but the score just didn't work at all. Nothing would have worked that felt like it had an author behind it; it had to just feel of its own place and time.



Mason, aged 16

RG: Is Mason the implied author of *Boyhood*?

RL: It's kind of his perspective, but you could argue that the whole thing is his memory of childhood. That's how I wanted it to feel, which is why there's no demarcation between the years. It needed to flow the way your mind does when you're looking back. I was aware that it was a period film we were shooting, only we were making it in the present. I knew there would be things that distinguished the years from one another, though actually I thought there would be more examples in the culture. What happened is that it was really only apparent in the technology. I thought there'd be parts where you went, "Oh, that's so mid-2000s!" But it's all in the games, cellphones, computers. There's no car that drives by and makes you think, "That's so 2004!" There are no hairstyles or clothes that really leap out at you. If you were to start in 1970 and go to 1982, you'd begin with hippy rock, then punk would emerge, then it would get New Wave-y. Cars would have changed significantly. That didn't really happen here.

That's my simple little cultural-anthropological experiment over 12 years. It relates to the fact that everyone was really online from that moment in the early 2000s. That's when we all became virtual. And I think that virtual world satisfies our need to manifest a lot of physical difference in the world. That part of human need is being taken care of through technology. If you have a new iPhone and



Mason, aged 17, with Ethan Hawke as his father

can do all this crazy stuff online and talk to your friends and have your world there, you maybe don't need to stick a safety pin through your cheek and reject the mainstream. And did a new music style emerge in those 12 years? The paradigm was already there. It's an extension of the idea that we've already discovered all the major things about our universe – relativity, gravity, the biological aspect of evolution. Maybe there are no new areas that will completely blow our minds. None of us wants to go through the world thinking we've reached the end of everything. We need rejuvenation and revolution in our fields. But maybe technology is pushing us in another direction. I find it disappointing that no one even comments on it. It's just a world we accept.

RG: This is like Mason's speech about how he doesn't want to live life through a screen.

RL: Yeah, he kind of has his own rebellion against all that. And this was how I felt, and where Ellar and I really converged. He had a healthy 17-year-old perspective on that and I had a 50-year-old perspective. I wasn't sure if this was all good, people living their lives online, and we overlapped on that feeling in a big way.

RG: I think that speech will be seen as prescient. Like Jesse's wish in *Before Sunrise* for a 24-hour TV show that documents ordinary life. Though in that case we ended up with *Big Brother*.

RL: I know – it happened. Though



Desert heat: Mason, aged 18, takes a mind-expanding trip into the desert soon after arriving at college

he clearly had in mind more of an experimental vibe. But Jesse's speech predated the whole reality TV thing. And Mason sees all this stuff coming – that we're turning ourselves willingly into robots. That's the way the future is. It creeps up on you. "Oh, isn't the internet great! We're all one big community." The NSA sees it differently.

RG: Did the structure of *Boyhood* allow for more collaboration from the cast?

RL: I have that collaboration on every film, but what allowed it to flourish, especially here, was the incredible gestation time. Every year we had another year to think about the next part. I could tell Ellar, "Hey, if you meet a girl and find yourself off alone talking, try to write down exactly what it is you talk about, because I have this scene in mind for next year and I don't want it to be some old guy writing about young kids: I want it to come from you. You write it." And he would do that over the years, these little artistic assignments. And we'd work up scenes that way. It's not even really about the words, it's just that you're off alone talking. I feel that way about the *Before* movies, especially the first one. It's not even really about what they say; you don't remember what you said afterwards necessarily, you just remember how you felt – I was kinda going for that, the feeling of: "Let's not get hung up on the words." I just wanted it to ring true to what a 16-year-old might be going through at that moment. So Ellar became a collaborator in the same way Ethan and Patricia [Arquette] and anyone else might. "Okay, next year we're gonna shoot a car ride, what do you wanna listen to in the car? What are we gonna talk about?"

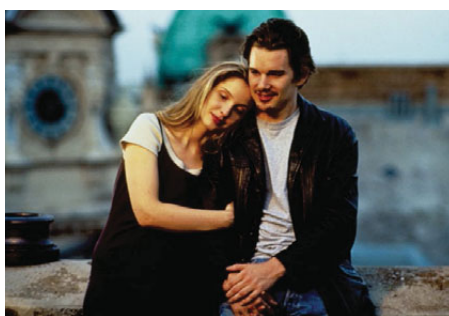
RG: Weren't there any hard things about making *Boyhood*? I've only heard about how harmonious it was.

RL: We were never threatened. Once the ship left port, it was just the grind of crewing up every year, getting the wheels going; we were basically shooting 12 films. You had to scout locations, get the cast and crew, everyone was busy with other things. We're only shooting three days, so there's the logistics of scheduling. For a low-budget indie film, we spent a total of two years in pre-production and two years in post; you don't usually get all that time because it isn't necessary. Here it was necessitated by the design. The numbers are kind of crazy, but so is everything about it. It's an indie epic. We shot 39 days, we got 140-something scenes, we did a lot of driving. Nothing makes sense about that. That was the idea, I guess. Maybe that's why it hasn't been done before. It's such a wildly impractical undertaking. But also a simple one in a way.

RG: Where did the money come from?

RL: IFC in New York. They gave us a couple of thousand dollars a year so I could shoot on film, pay people SAG [Screen Actors Guild] minimum. Interestingly they never upped the budget. It cost more in year 12 than in year one, but the budget never got any bigger so it was always a challenge. Then Universal saw it at Sundance and picked it up internationally.

RG: There's been a lot of water under the bridge since *Dazed and Confused*, but whenever I hear you and Universal mentioned, I think of your diary that was published in the *Austin*



Before Sunrise

'Boyhood' is an indie epic. We shot 39 days. Nothing makes sense about that. Maybe that's why it hasn't been done before

Chronicle about the pressures the studio put you under while you were making that film. Do you keep a diary on each film?

RL: No. That one was incriminating evidence. That kind of got me in trouble. It got me kicked out of Hollywood for just a moment there. They thought I was the kiss-and-tell type.

RG: Is it true that you faxed that whole 8,000 word diary to the paper, not suspecting they would run the whole thing?

RL: Yeah. I thought they were gonna edit it down but they ran it all. That was pre-internet and this was my local paper – they were my people. I thought I could be honest with them and no one would ever hear about it. But it really hit. It was faxed around, everyone got to see it. Wow, I'd forgotten about all that.

RG: You sounded very bruised. At one point you say, "All I care about is wresting my movie from the jaws of their compromised mediocrity machine."

RL: It was a purge. That was me when I was still recovering, still in the trenches. I feel like I was



Before Midnight

a spoiled kid slightly. Now I'd just be thankful for the opportunity. I'd still feel the same way, but... You learn how to not see everything as a threat, and as a sign that they're trying to fuck with your movie. There's a little paranoia there, a little insecurity. The more you do it, the more confidence you get. I'm not saying it isn't accurate – it's accurate to how I felt at the time.

RG: Presumably a major studio wouldn't make a film like that now, would they?

RL: That's right. And I wouldn't be in such a vulnerable position as a first-timer in the studio system. They all kinda like to beat you up a little, but... You're being tested constantly. Now I've made 18 films, so in any given studio system it's me that's the old guy. The executives I talk to now saw *Dazed* in college. It's a better position to be in than the unproven kid. Although at that point I also had more commercial potential: more possibilities that I've since proven myself incapable of delivering on [laughs].

i *Boyhood* is released on 11 July and is reviewed on page 68. Gabe Klinger's documentary *Double Play: James Benning and Richard Linklater* will screen in London at the ICA on 26 July and Hackney Picturehouse on 27 July. A short film by :: kogonada, *The Long Conversation: Richard Linklater on Cinema and Time*, can be viewed at j.mp/SSLongcon



Testament of youth: Wiley Wiggins as Mitch and Christin Hinojosa as Sabrina in *Dazed and Confused*

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SINISTER

No one would question the fact that appearances are critical to the way in which we experience and interpret movies. So is it really such a big step to suggest that even small, apparently insignificant, details – such as whether a character is left-handed – can affect how we read a film?

By David Thomson

Let's start with a quiz question: what did Roger Thornhill and Eve Kendall have in common? You can carry on with the game if you identify them as the leading characters in *North by Northwest*. But what do they share beyond screen time in that enchanting film? No, the same sleeping compartment on the 20th Century train is not enough. Nor is their common plight on the slippery faces of American presidents at Mount Rushmore. If you want a clue, I'll say that the link shows up when he shaves in the bathroom at the LaSalle Street rail depot in Chicago and when she notes the address where the art auction will take place, the one that starts with her blonde hair and Vandamm's right hand caressing her neck and shoulder. 'Hand' is a nudge. You see, Roger and Eve are both left-handed. So were Cary Grant and Eva Marie Saint.

'So what?' you say. He's surely not going to write a whole essay about being left-handed in the movies! After all, left-handedness is just a fact of life, isn't it? It's no more indicative or revealing than being red-haired, black or gay. These things happen. Of course, but still, it's foolish not to notice them. You see, appearance (and its impact) is a vital part of watching a movie, and it's sensible to see that Eve and Roger are both lefties, even if Eve might have been played by Deborah Kerr, Dorothy Dandridge or... Katharine Hepburn? Now, you may be left-handed and so, quite properly, you refuse to hear any suggestion of flaw, demerit or culpability just because of that. Still, you may have heard the curious history of being left-handed.

In that photograph where Lyndon Johnson is being sworn in as president on the aircraft flying back to Washington from Dallas, which hand has he raised? 'Heil Hitler' required the right arm – only disability or amputation permitted the left. In how many courtroom films have witnesses heard the routine phrase, 'Raise your right hand'? I can't believe that many oath-administering processes would actually object to the left hand being used. A gesture is just a sign. But still I hear the refrain, and I realise that left-handed people are expected to offer their right hands on being introduced to someone. It's not a huge intrusion. So the right handshake of greeting is proof that it does not hold a weapon? Is that why Billy the Kid had the drop on so many people, because he was a left-handed gun?

I hope no child today is victimised or bullied for being left-handed, though that's a recent reform. You still meet people of a certain age who recall the embarrassment and pain they felt at being told to write with their right hand and not the left. A left-handed compliment is one you'd rather not receive. Left is very close to being gauche. 'Sinister' derives from left-handedness and its sense of attendant evil (or devil). And in the United States being a leftist

is still frowned upon: no one could get elected president if he admitted to leftist ideas. Yet in the years since 1945, Harry Truman, Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama have all been lefties. I'm not sure who keeps count of such things, but left-handedness is still reckoned to be a characteristic of only ten to 15 per cent of human beings (the number is mounting). So six presidents in 70 years could be... a plot? Or is it any odder than two stars in one film being left-handed? (If you're beginning to feel insecure, I hasten to reassure you: James Mason was the odd man out in *North by Northwest*, a righty.)

To stifle any fear that I am down on southpaws (where did that word come from?), just glory in this list of left-handers: Aristotle, Michelangelo, Mozart, Beethoven, Goethe, Mark Twain, Einstein, Kafka, Chaplin, Astaire, Garbo... Kermit the Frog.

Levity aside, I come to a more delicate issue, and one where subjectivity cannot be eliminated. Do left-handers look different? The ultimate delicacy in that question is not so much toward the feelings of left-handed people, but in how we think and feel about what we are seeing. In *North by Northwest*, in the scene in which Thornhill/Grant is shaving, there is another man beside him doing the same thing. The other man turns to stare, because Roger is using Eve's ladies' razor. But within the frame there is this added tension: that there are two ways to go – naturally, and Roger's, which is the least common. Grant's hair was always parted on his right. He works the phone with his left hand; he writes that way; he does the most ordinary, everyday things that way – and we came away from 40 years of inspection convinced he was an unusual man. You can put that down to excellent scripts and the best directors. You can say his wit and intelligence were out of the ordinary. You can even argue (from life) that he was a man with abiding anxieties: the truth about his mother; his own sexual inclination; whether he was English or American; how much to tip. I'm wary of this biography, and warier still of making generalisations about left-handedness. But I believe it is a part of Grant's angle of looking, an elegant slanting uneasiness, impossible to describe or to miss.

If you think that's fanciful, just look at the scene in *North by Northwest* where Roger is seated at Eve's table in the train dining car. That's not incidental: she tipped the waiter \$5 to have him put there – today it would take \$20 (if trains had dining cars – the 20th Century ceased in 1967). The scene is piquant, or unnatural, in so many ways: the mere fact of them being put together; the uncanny amount Eve knows about Roger; the nearly insolent way in which she offers herself sexually;



MR RIGHT? Left-handedness can play a subtle role in differentiating a character on screen, as Hitchcock was no doubt aware in casting 'lefties' Cary Grant and Eva Marie Saint in *North by Northwest*

CINEMA



KOBAL COLLECTION (3)

and the extent to which this plays upon his childish irresponsibility – a subtext in *North by Northwest* is Roger's need to be educated.

Of course, the scene is sexy and comic at the same time, but it is subversive too (especially in 1959) of so many of our polite expectations. The scene climaxes when he lights her cigarette. This is a tender, intricate embrace: his left hand with a match, her left hand holding the cigarette. At the same time, this is very textual and soaringly suggestive. I have no idea whether Hitchcock cast these two because they were left-handed – there were so many other reasons for using them, not least the chemistry they found together. But I trust that very watchful man enough to guess that he noticed it and used it. It's hard to be technical in explaining this, but the unreliability or immaturity in both characters – she is a spy, he is a child – is borne out, in part, by their left-handedness and what that 'means' in a frame.

Just think of that moment when Eve takes a note on the phone. She writes with her left hand (of course), but it is the nearly universal habit of left-handers to write left to right. Right-handers write that way – away from their body, as it were. But there are incidences of left-handers writing with their true naturalness, away from the body, right to left. Leonardo da Vinci had that ability, so that some of his work looks like mirror writing. Now consider this – and I cannot propose it without using words that may be troubling. But if you photograph a left-hand writing in the right-handed direction, in towards his or her body, that action looks cramped, introverted or even neurotic. To compensate for what may be an age-old enforced thing, some left-handers have developed a 'crabbed' hand so that they are nearly writing upside down. Just watch. And realise that whenever a thing is filmed, anything that is watched is automatically stressed. I might as well go all the way: I think left-handed actions can look awkward and feel a touch dishonest or enforced. Remember when Eve shoots Roger – isn't that bold action made all the more surreal or suspicious because she's left-handed?

Is that Eva Marie Saint's fault? Of course not. How could anyone with that name be at fault? Why didn't Hitch know what to expect after seeing the glove scene in *On the Waterfront*? And yet... suppose Hitch could have said to Ms Saint, "I'm sorry, but there's just a little too much left-handedness in this picture. Could you shoot him with your right hand?" Now, you may say, that seems unfair or imposing on the actress. But then I remember

that before making *The Hours*, where her Virginia Woolf would begin to compose *Mrs Dalloway*, the left-handed Nicole Kidman chose to employ her right hand because that was Woolf's handedness and that shift seemed truer. The story goes that she took instruction from someone she knew – Tom Cruise, a zealous lefty.

That leads to a point of philosophy that grows larger the more you think about it. I refer to the vexed matter of personal appearance. Now, in my estimate, Kidman is very striking in *The Hours*, and I do not mean the artful nose, her dowdy clothes or the severe hairstyle. Those things are secondary to her attempt to imagine the pain of that English writer, and her emotional example in the pattern of the whole film. But very few viewers knew or cared that Woolf had been right-handed, and no one that I remember had any objection that this Woolf was too tall, or that she sounded a little Australian or so unpatriotic. If you have ever heard Woolf's voice you would guess that a film imitating it would have been laughed off the screen as the character lost most of our sympathy.

But diligent imitation is often a touchstone in acting. In the 60s, when Laurence Olivier played Othello, he put on an elaborate dark make-up, he curled his hair and seemed to study Caribbean accents and how to deepen his own voice. The results were acclaimed. For *Raging Bull*, Robert De Niro (a lefty) did two antagonistic things: he got into fighting shape for the bouts from Jake LaMotta's heyday, and then he put on maybe 60 pounds of flab to be the fallen LaMotta trying to do his nightclub act. We responded to these efforts with enthusiasm, and because De Niro was then a passionate actor. He was awarded the Oscar. For *Moulin Rouge*, Nicole Kidman worked to be singer and dancer and she achieved the bone-white flesh tone that suited the sickly Satine. But she didn't insist on contracting consumption. De Niro stopped short of having six fights with Sugar Ray Robinson (or a modern equivalent). And Olivier did not live as a black man with a white wife in communities where that arrangement might make a black man uneasy or angry. If Morgan Freeman played Lear, I'm sure the audience would be eager to see him – though wouldn't there be dismay if he put on white face to do it?

What I'm edging towards is a response to the frequent complaint that a movie critic should not make personal remarks about an actor's looks. I have not seen Angelina Jolie in *Maleficent* yet, but it's coming up and I can imagine pitfalls in writing about it. Ms Jolie is beautiful, isn't

Whenever a thing is filmed, anything that is watched is automatically stressed... and left-handed actions can look awkward and feel a touch dishonest or enforced

HANDS ON
When Anthony Perkins is playing Norman Bates in *Psycho* (below left), he is left-handed, but when he is in character as mother (below right), he is right-handed



she? I know, that quality is in the eye of the beholder. But can't we agree she's at least good-looking, or pretty? She did take that name. In several earlier films, I'll confess, I found her attractive – *Girl, Interrupted* and *The Bone Collector*, for example. In those films, there was a vulnerability in her semi-perfect, or neo-perfect face. And soon enough that face was being used in cosmetics advertising, and becoming an icon in magazines. As time passed, and as Ms Jolie grew older and more celebrated, a kind of glaze came over her face. It felt to me as if she was being occupied by her own legend, so that the face (that soul for an actor) was becoming a touch less human and a degree more mythic. (Similar things happened with many great stars – Joan Crawford, John Wayne and even Cary Grant whose retirement came at a time when he faced the challenge of disguising ageing.) So, it's natural enough that Jolie should be cast as Maleficent, and surely the identity and the promotion of that picture are based on her image. So how can any writer tackle the task without addressing the history of her face – and I mean Jolie's face, not the face of the character? (By the way, you may be interested to hear that both Jolie and Brad Pitt are left-handed.)

But if you insist that it is Jolie's face, there are problems of decorum or tact. I will confess that I can hardly look at the hurt in Sylvester Stallone's eyes without laughing. Equally, I have found it hard to ignore the way Norma Shearer seems to squint. Now, I know that word is crude and unscientific. Probably she had nothing more than a minor and pleasing misalignment in her gaze. But it puzzled me that films did not incorporate that and use it as an inescapable aspect of character – in the way Sydney Greenstreet and Peter Lorre together make a sweet duet of different physiques and voices, almost as if they were the *noir* Laurel and Hardy. In short, how can we respond to a film without feeling what we see and hear – the actuality of the actors, a matter of hair colour, weight, height, voice and so many other factors, including handedness?

For example, in *Last Tango in Paris*, is it legitimate to address the film without a consideration of nakedness? The leading female character in that film is 'Jeanne'. I am sure 1,000 young actresses could have played the part, if they were prepared to take off their clothes and be photographed without coyness, dismay or showing off. Maria Schneider was cast, and she contributed the ripeness (is that word OK?) of her 20-year-old body to the film. She did this for \$4,000. I'm not sure whether she gives a 'great performance' in *Last Tango*, but I believe her unequivocal



physical presence is central to the picture. And I know that her part in it was measured in the film's box office. When you recall that Dominique Sanda was once in line for the film – so much more guarded, so much less voluptuous (is that word OK?), and seemingly so much more experienced – you can see how a particular personality and appearance are not just decoration. It's Maria's body.

Should I add that Marlon Brando (at \$250,000 plus points for the job) eventually declined to let the camera see Marlon Brando's private parts because... well, because a male star needs his privacy? So Paul had to wear a coat (and a very eloquent coat it is).

It's in that light that I find left-handedness increasingly intriguing. For it has the integrity of Kirk Douglas's dimple or Herbert Marshall's limp. You may say, after all, that left-handedness doesn't matter at the lofty level of film commentary. You may be right, but I will just add that in the endlessly fascinating archive of auteurship, Alfred Hitchcock liked lefties as much as he did knives. Kim Novak in *Vertigo* (both of her) is left-handed. The same goes for Tippi Hedren in *The Birds* and *Marnie*. Anthony Perkins was left-handed. But there we come to a special footnote. In *Psycho*, when Perkins is playing Norman – cleaning out the blood in the motel bathroom, eating candy – he is left-handed. But when he's mother, using the knife – he's right-handed. It's another of those lurking jokes in *Psycho*. Mother's not myself today. ☹

APPEARANCES MATTER
(Clockwise from top)
Angelina Jolie in *Maleficent*,
Maria Schneider and Marlon
Brando in *Last Tango in Paris*;
and Paul Newman as the
outlaw Billy the Kid in *The
Left Handed Gun*



BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE (© KOBAL COLLECTION (3))



THE KILL LIST

As action movies hit their stride in the 1980s, the biceps grew bigger as the body count rose. Then, in the 90s, the brute was remodelled and a more defined muscularity took hold, paving the way for today's versatile crossover star – buff, tough and often just a little bit bland

By Nick Pinkerton

LIGHTS, CAMERA... ACTION!
 Arnold Schwarzenegger, the epitome of 80s action heroes, in *Predator* (above) and Mark Wahlberg in *Transformers: Age of Extinction* (right)

Every generation of critics must mint its own clichés about what's wrong with the contemporary action movie – 'MTV-style' cutting in the 80s, nauseating shaky-cam and weightless CG 'like video game cut-scenes' today. It's as though there's something in the very scope implicit in a phrase like 'action movie' – one could only get any broader by saying 'image movies' – that invites sweeping generalisations, and so sensorial barrage is met with similarly imprecise language. This baggy, nebulous genre is often slammed for its paucity of ideas, but if you listen closely that giddy nothingness says many things.

The action movie, as we presently understand the designation, percolated through the 1970s and cooled into something identifiable in the 1980s. It took a number of disparate genres – the war movie, the spy movie, the police thriller, the sword-and-sandal epic, chop-socky, swashbuckler and spaghetti western – and lashed them together under one moniker. As all cognac is brandy, but not all brandy is cognac, so too movies that belong to any and all of the above categories aren't necessarily action movies in the modern sense. Because it's difficult to pinpoint any single factor that distinguishes an action movie, we tend to fall back on Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart's definition of pornography: we know it when we see it. Clint Eastwood's *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (1976), for example, isn't one, but *The Eiger Sanction* (1975) kind of is, and of *Firefox* (1982) there can be no doubt.

One pertinent factor in defining the modern action movie was a new maximalist tendency, best tabulated in the rise of body counts. A chart created by





computer scientist/“data tinkerer” Randal Olson this year tallied up the “top 25 deadliest actors of all time by on-screen kills”, with still-going buff 80s icons Arnold Schwarzenegger (369), Sylvester Stallone (267) and Dolph Lundgren (239) all cracking the top five. (Of the top 25, only six were established names before the mid-70s.) The maximalism extended to the very dimensions of these stars. Theirs was the era of the bicep, and if we were to capture it in a single image, we might choose the moment in *Predator* (1987) when Schwarzenegger greets Carl Weathers with a friendly arm wrestle – “Dillon! You son of a bitch!” – and the frame momentarily isolates their two arms as they form an indestructible “W” of throbbing muscle, which stands for ‘WIN’.

Received wisdom has it that there’s a correlation between the Supersizing of the American action movie and the political ascent in the United States of what has somewhat ironically been dubbed ‘conservatism’, particularly the 1980 election of former California governor Ronald Reagan to the presidency. Drawing a parallel between Hollywood action and domestic politics is even more tempting if one takes in to account the troubled fates of the Reagan-era superstars under the Clinton administration. The days when the historical fluke of losing Vietnam could be corrected by on-screen recount, entire villages of brown insurgents being vanquished at the business end of an M60, couldn’t last forever, and it was evident that a cultural shift was forthcoming when, in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991), Eddie Furlong’s skate rat John Connor forbade Schwarzenegger’s kinder, gentler T-800 from shooting to kill. Schwarzenegger’s box-office dominance would fade as the decade wore on, though he enjoyed the consolation prize of Reagan’s old governorship. (While tempting, overarching pop-political analogies are also treacherous – to return to the case of *Predator*, the movie’s early relish of military might later recedes to show the hubris of such eagerness.)

We don’t worship at the altar of the bicep any longer, but new idols have taken its place. In a feature called ‘Building a bigger action hero’ for the May 2014 issue of *Men’s Journal*, writer Logan Hill outlines the obstacles that confront an actor hoping for a big franchise payday, the two-a-day hardcore fitness regimens and pitiless nutrition plans or, failing that, testosterone injections. “An actor who can’t get jacked on deadline,” writes Hill, “doesn’t have a shot at being a leading man in today’s Hollywood.” Interviewing trainers-to-the-stars, Hill captures the reality of an industry that expects stars to be able to fill out superhero spandex at the drop of a cape should Marvel come calling, to develop an inguinal crease like

the Mariana Trench and go on a crash diet “lean out” before the big shirtless scenes, which allows the performers to hit three or four per cent body fat and therefore appear to the camera as no man or woman naturally appears – not that recognisable physical reality is at a premium when fantasy commands an ever larger market share at the multiplex. This doesn’t signify a return of the 80s-vintage gung-ho, diesel-powered brute, but a remodel – in many cases, a generic physical type that can be conveniently slotted in to blockbuster events, preferably a cut-yet-malleable nonentity à la Sam Worthington. The big inspiration for the aspired-to sinewy look, and a watershed movie moment in men’s fitness, is Brad Pitt as Tyler Durden in *Fight Club* (1999) – you know, the film where Pitt laughs at a Gucci underwear ad on the bus and says, “Self-improvement is masturbation.”

Mark Wahlberg was the face of Calvin Klein underwear back in 1991, when climactically dropping trou was an essential part of his Funky Bunch stage show. Now 43, exceedingly canny businessman Wahlberg is something of a transitional figure in action cinema. He came to the screen after the Reagan-era *Übermensch* had lost box-office favour, ground up by a shifting of cultural tectonic plates called grunge, political correctness, Tarantino and so on, and he cut his teeth in adult dramas with more than a smidge of artistic ambition, acting for Paul Thomas Anderson, James Gray and David O. Russell – each of whom has directed action scenes, and none of whom would be mistaken for an action director. (Bruce Willis, who was in *Pulp Fiction* for God’s sake, also weathered this wilderness period quite successfully, though has since returned to Dying Hard.) Today, between more ambitious projects, Wahlberg can be counted on for a mid-budget actioner every January/February (*Contraband*, *Broken City*, *2 Guns*, *Lone Survivor* and counting). And while Wahlberg has avoided traditional blockbuster bluster in the main, this summer he is appearing in Michael Bay’s *Transformers: Age of Extinction*.

Lauded TV commercial director Bay’s debut feature was *Bad Boys* (1995), released at the start of a fluky period for American action. The biggest action star was arguably a lanky, shaggy-haired Canadian, Keanu Reeves, and his best if not his biggest movie had been directed by a woman: Kathryn Bigelow’s *Point Break* (1991). Caucasian martial artists like Jean-Claude Van Damme and Steven Seagal had been edged out by an honest-to-goodness Asian invasion, an international breakout for gravity-defiant Hong Kong action: Tsui Hark wire-fu, John Woo bullet ballet and human special effects like Jackie Chan and Jet Li. But through the mid- to late 90s, in collabora-

The industry now expects stars to fill out superhero spandex at the drop of a cape should Marvel come calling, and to develop an inguinal crease like the Mariana Trench



MAN OF STEEL
Liam Neeson plays a stooped, dolorous middle-aged avenger in Pierre Morel’s *Taken* (left), but is more interesting as an air marshal in Jaume Collet-Serra’s *Non-Stop* (far left)

tion with producers Don Simpson (who died in 1996) and Jerry Bruckheimer, who'd made a bundle on *Top Gun* and *Beverly Hills Cop*, Michael Bay kept the fireballs burning, and the new millennium would belong to him.

Writing about Bay in *Film Comment* of July/August 2001 – a somewhat pivotal date, positioned as it is at the cusp of the superhero deluge and the transformations wrought by 9/11 – Kent Jones noted action cinema's "urge toward total, near-hallucinatory confusion and stasis", singling out the asteroid-drilling material in Bay's *Armageddon*. "There are long stretches during those scenes," Jones writes, "when I had no idea who or what was doing what to what or whom, when the screen was awash in an ocean of hurtling rocks and bodies, white smoke jets, scowling faces, asteroid fissures, uncoiling cables, heavy machinery, and, most delightfully of all, bullets sprayed from a Gatling gun."

Against Bay's blinding maelstrom of imagery, the cinema of Paul W.S. Anderson can be held up as an unlikely bastion of the cool, classical unities. Anderson's first big-money outing was a film based on arcade quarter-muncher *Mortal Kombat*, but it was in 2002 with another video-game adaptation, the first of many *Resident Evil* films, that Anderson found his franchise. Anderson has since attracted a small but devoted band of highbrow admirers, including Dave Kehr at the *New York Times*, who has enthused over the clarity of the strategy in the director's set pieces. ("It's like a chess game, they're anticipating each other's moves.") And lest it be thought Anderson is a thoughtless prodigy squandering himself on dunderheaded video-game adaptations, it's worth quoting him in conversation about his art in a recent *New York Magazine* interview with critic Bilge Ebiri, discussing "the secret to a good explosion":

"When there's a big explosion, it doesn't really have a visceral impact on the audience if it's just flinging people through the air. They know that's just stunts. But if you fly people through the air and then they hit something, it's a lot better. And then if they hit something really hard – like, you know, a brick wall – it's even better. And if they hit a kind of rough edge on that brick wall, then you're getting to the good stuff. And then if what they hit breaks, then that's the best."

The villains of the *Resident Evil* films are overlords of the Umbrella Corporation. Anderson has himself been able to achieve a fair amount of independent agency thanks to the success of the business model he has pursued through a joint venture between his own Impact Pictures and the German production company Constantin Film, appealing to an increasingly international (in his case, Eurocentric) market. Luc Besson's EuropaCorp has taken a similar route – this year its summer offering is Scarlett Johansson-starrer *Lucy*. Even when lousy, which they almost always are, the EuropaCorp movies are usually good for at least one breakneck *parkourscene*, some jaw-dropping xenophobia and perhaps a Strong Female Character. Like Anderson, whose wife Milla Jovovich is the anchor of the *Resident Evil* films, Besson has favoured women-of-action at least since *Nikita* (1990). Despite the legacy of Sigourney Weaver and Linda Hamilton, this remains a rarity – see the difficulty that Gina 'Crash' Carano has had finding good films after her breakout role in Steven Soderbergh's *Haywire* (2011), or the sober-



THE WAY OF THE GUN
Bruce Willis and Will Patton in *Armageddon* (top), Keanu Reeves and Patrick Swayze in *Point Break* (above), Milla Jovovich in *Resident Evil: Afterlife* (below, left) and Scarlett Johansson in *Lucy* (below, right)



ing fact that of the 23 superhero movies slated for release in the next four years from Marvel, Warner Bros, 20th Century Fox and Sony/Columbia, only one (*Wonder Woman*) has a woman as its central focus.

EuropaCorp's most notable contribution to 21st-century action, though, has been Liam Neeson's stooped middle-aged avenger in Pierre Morel's *Taken* (2007). (More interesting, however, are Neeson's outings with Catalonia-born Hollywood émigré Jaume Collet-Serra, including *Unknown* (2011), this year's *Non-Stop*, and the forthcoming *Run All Night*.)

That the onset of male menopause should act as no barrier to a star's remaining a well-oiled killing machine is also the assumption of the bourbon-and-human-growth-hormone-fuelled *Expendables* movies, the third of which is incoming. *Expendables* architect Sylvester Stallone's box-office potency had flagged through the late 90s and early 2000s, but Sly crept back in to the public eye through the strategic deployment of his two evergreen franchises by 2010, when he inaugurated a third. *The Expendables* was, as critic Eric Hynes has observed, reminiscent of Andrew V. McLaglen's all-star revues in the late 60s and 70s, "films that showcased packs of old-dog A-list actors chewing away at the B-movie scenery," mellowed into self-parody by age. It was an opportunity for Stallone and Lundgren to add a few more bodies to their formidable kill lists and a few more dollars to their retirement funds, joined by new contenders like Jason Statham (182 and counting), and Eastern auxiliary member Jet Li (topped in the Pacific Rim only by Chow Yun-Fat).

Of the summer's other big action movies, we have Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson in *Hercules*, in which Brett Ratner, author of the *Rush Hour* trilogy, tackles the same mythological material that wholly failed to revive the career of *Die Hard 2* and *Cliffhanger* director Renny Harlin in this year's *The Legend of Hercules*. Of course, Harlin didn't have the benefit of ex-professional wrestler Johnson, who is a brand unto himself, while confirmed summer event *Guardians of the Galaxy* comes with the powerful Marvel Studios imprimatur behind it. Oh, and there's also *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, which no one over the age of 14 should be required to form an opinion of.

In the face of spectacular CG inducements and ubiquitous ad campaigns, there are those viewers who retain a stubborn fondness for analogue action, and they have found a haven of sorts in the direct-to-video (DTV) market. DTV action has provided regular gigs for past-prime 80s stalwarts like Lundgren, Van Damme and Seagal – never extended *Expendables* membership, presumably because he is by all accounts a terrible person –



and has even spawned its own stars, most notable among these being awesome mixed-martial-arts death-dealer and stiff line-reader Scott Adkins. Born in Birmingham and trained on Hong Kong sets, Adkins has appeared on the big-screen in *The Expendables 2* and *The Legend of Hercules*, though his star-making roles were two DTV sequels to Walter Hill's prison boxing film *Undisputed* (2002). Adkins later appeared alongside Lundgren and Van Damme in *Universal Soldier: Day of Reckoning*, the John Hyams-directed fifth sequel to the 1992 JCVD film, which had a brief theatrical run in 2012 and became a sort of rallying point for DTV enthusiasts, who festooned it with insupportable Kubrick comparisons.

Adkins has his mini-cult, as do demigods too numerous to discuss individually: Bigelow and Paul Greengrass are the intelligentsia-approved figures, while at the other end of the spectrum we have Neveldine/ Taylor (the *Crank* films, *Gamer*), Justin Lin (various *Fast & Furious*es) and Tony Scott, elevated to immortality after throwing himself from the Vincent Thomas Bridge in 2012. (Legend speaks of other still more vulgar sects, famed for their wilful perversity.) Suffice it to say that many exotic birds of paradise populate the jungle of contemporary action that lies beyond the superhero tentpoles – though this won't persuade the nostalgists who only want to talk about "how Don Siegel would have done it".

i *Transformers: Age of Extinction* is released in the UK on 10 July, *The Expendables 3* on 14 August and *Hercules* on 25 July. They will be reviewed in future issues of S&S

'The Expendables' was a chance for Stallone and Lundgren to add a few more bodies to their formidable kill lists and a few more dollars to their retirement funds

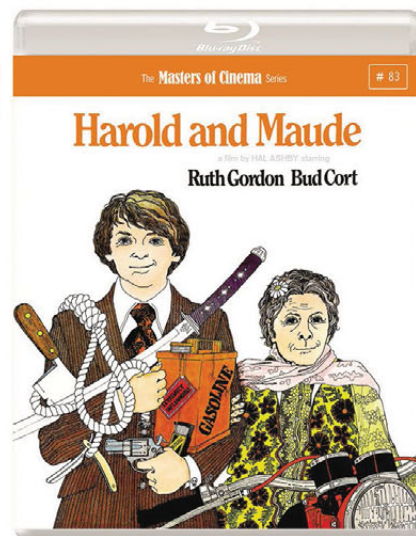


OLD DOGS, NEW TRICKS Schwarzenegger, Stallone, Lundgren et al in *The Expendables 3* (above); Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson (pictured with Mark Wahlberg, left, in *Pain & Gain*) will star in Brett Ratner's *Hercules* (far left), the second outing this year for the mythological hero following Renny Harlin's *The Legend of Hercules*

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SUMMER IN THE CITY

Twenty-five years on, *'Do the Right Thing'*, Spike Lee's angry snapshot of racial tensions reaching boiling point in a New York City neighbourhood, still resonates. **Ashley Clark** considers the film's enduring power, while key figures from the film world explain its hold on their imaginations

Spike Lee's third feature, *Do the Right Thing*, was released 25 years ago this summer, and remains a genuine one-off. A vivid, unabashedly theatrical snapshot of one blisteringly hot day in the life of a multicultural Brooklyn block, it was an impassioned response to simmering racial tensions in New York City by its then 32-year-old auteur. From the superb performances by a vast ensemble cast to Ernest Dickerson's searing cinematography; from its barbed, lyrical screenplay to the lushly versatile jazz score by the director's father Bill Lee, it resounds as a singular artistic triumph.

Despite an Oscar nomination for Best Original Screenplay, Lee's urgent dispatch was ignored by the Academy in the Best Picture category, which was won instead

by the reassuringly tame race-relations drama *Driving Miss Daisy*. Yet *Do the Right Thing's* influence looms large across popular culture on an international scale: it's a clear forerunner for urban dramas like *La Haine* (1995) and *City of God* (2002); it's been affectionately parodied on *Sesame Street*; and even the Obamas claim they saw it on their first date. Moreover, many of the issues it raises are still pertinent: Ryan Coogler's recent Sundance-winning *Fruitvale Station*, for example, echoes Lee's film in its focus on the police killing of a young black urban American male.

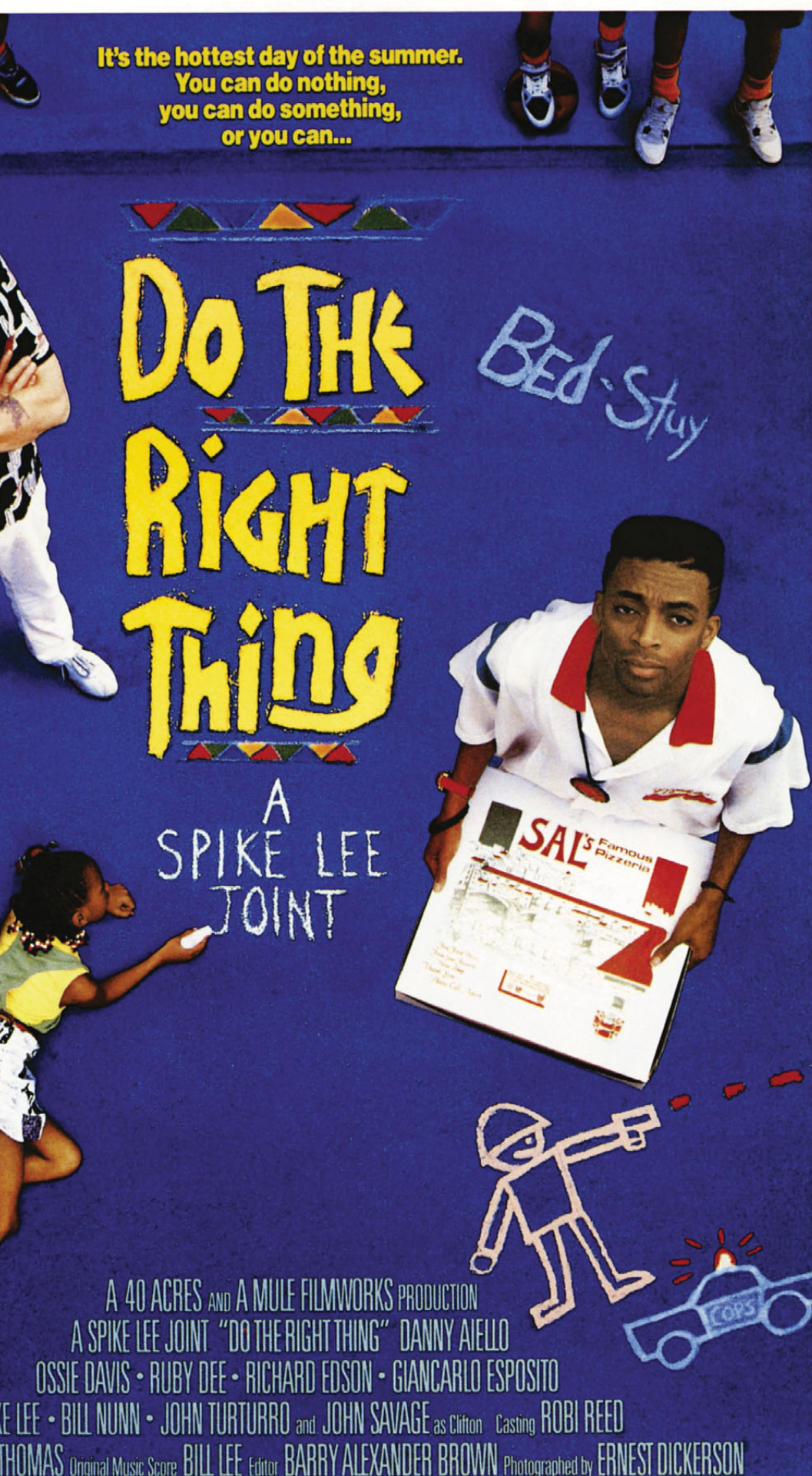
We asked a selection of contributors on both sides of the Atlantic to offer personal reflections on why *Do The Right Thing* continues to mean so much to them.



CITY HEAT
Spike Lee's colourful visual palette in *Do the Right Thing* presents a vibrant backdrop for his multicultural New York City neighbourhood



BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE (C) KOBAL COLLECTION (C)



Steve McQueen

The first time I saw *Do the Right Thing*, when it was over, I didn't speak for a while. I was just trying to take it all in. It was

a knockout – almost like being in a boxing ring. Sometimes it was brutal, and sometimes beautiful; an attack, done with style, anger and compassion. In terms of giving a snapshot of a New York community, the only thing that comes close are those films from the 30s and 40s like *Angels with Dirty Faces*.

It brings back great memories, but also painful ones, and that combination is so powerful. Great art has a resonance in the past, present and future, and *Do the Right Thing* is just that. When it came out, the echoes with the UK political situation were loud and clear. In England, there was police brutality and unemployment, and it resonated with me in a direct way. I love the bit when John Savage's character – the white guy wearing the Larry Bird jersey, carrying his bicycle – steps on the new Air Jordans that Buggin' Out is wearing, and this sparks a heated conversation about gentrification. It reminds me of what England was like at the time, and it also illustrated the importance of trainers back then!

There are many iconic moments: the to-camera 'love and hate' speech by Radio Raheem stands out, as does the conversation between pizza-shop owner Sal and his racist son Pino, who says he feels sick of being in the neighbourhood. Through the window of the pizzeria you can see the autistic character Smiley milling around, and the way Lee builds up the tension is amazing; it's ingrained in my mind. But my most powerful memory is right at the start: you see the Universal logo – the image of the world turning – and there's this lazy saxophone melody over it ['Lift Every Voice and Sing', the so-called 'Negro National Anthem']; it's as though Universal's logo becomes part of the fabric of the piece, and it feels like the setting for an old fable that's been told and retold. There's the 40 Acres and a Mule [Lee's production company] symbol, and then we go into the stunning credit sequence with Rosie Perez dancing to Public Enemy's 'Fight The Power'. It's just beautiful. I was knocked out before the film even started.

Steve McQueen is the director of *Hunger*, *Shame* and *12 Years a Slave*



Chaz Ebert

My husband Roger and I had our first date in September 1989, but we didn't discuss *Do the Right Thing*, even though it

meant so much to him. He didn't assume just because I was black that I wanted to discuss Spike's movies. At some point



we did talk about it, though, because it made an incredible impression on Roger – he even threatened never to go back to the Cannes Film Festival because it didn't win a prize [it lost out to *sex, lies and videotape* for the Palme d'Or]. Spike wrote a letter to Roger that said, "Thanks for sticking up for me. I give you permission to go back to the Cannes Film Festival."

One of the things Roger found so strong about the film was his feeling that Spike did a movie about race in America that didn't take sides. Usually, such movies have an agenda. In 1989, from an African-American point of view, we were very excited to see the movie. Lee had burst on to the scene: this new voice to advocate for urban black Americans. We were also irritated because some social commentators said there was going to be this big race riot because of it. And we said: "Why would a movie start a race riot?" It was incomprehensible to us that people would think that way.

I also remember leaving the cinema after those two closing quotes on the screen, from Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. Some people said, "Did you see the juxtaposition of those quotes? He had the Malcolm X one last – 'I don't even call it violence when it's self-defence, I call it intelligence' – so does that mean he was advocating violence?" We said: "No, he had both on the screen to leave it up to you to decide which was the most valid for the state of race relations at the time."

Chaz Ebert is a writer and broadcaster, and the publisher of *RogerEbert.com*. *Life Itself*, a documentary celebrating the life of film critic Roger Ebert (1942–2013), will be released later this year



Penny Woolcock

It's one of my all-time favourites. It's an extraordinary achievement because essentially it's 24 hours of a very hot day which culminates with a young black man being killed by the police – and yet it's so funny and so humane. Every single character in it, except for possibly the policeman who kills Radio Raheem, is afforded some dimensions, so you understand where they're coming from. One of my favourite scenes is when the Korean grocer stands up to the towering figure of Radio Raheem with his ghetto-blasters, and Raheem respects him for it, cuts him some slack. It uses a light touch to say things that are quite difficult to say, and it never feels like you're being preached to. For example, there are the three old black guys sat on the corner who are chewing the fat and complaining about how they're not making money like the Korean shopkeeper. You feel for all the characters,



including Sal, the guys on the corner, and Mookie [played by Spike Lee] with his slouchy walk, his refusal to hurry and his refusal to apologise for anything – he's such a slacker. I rewatched it recently and it's just as fresh and exciting as it always has been. It's visually extraordinary and it has such energy. It starts and it's like a rollercoaster that barrels along and keeps surprising you.

Penny Woolcock is a filmmaker and opera director. Her credits include *I Day* and *One Mile Away*



Destiny Ekaragha

I grew up on an estate in New Cross in London, but it didn't feel like we were in the 'ghetto' – we were just a bunch of kids that would play out in the summer. For me, *Do the Right Thing*, which I first saw in the 90s in my early teens, captured exactly

that feeling, with its colour and vibrant characters like Mister Señor Love Daddy in his budget radio station. One of my favourite lines ever is when he says, "Today's weather is... HOT!" He ain't messing around with degrees Fahrenheit or anything like that.

It remains so important because it touches on issues of race and class – and people's perceptions of those things – like no other film before or after. It was the first film I saw which broke narrative and had people talking directly to camera. It was laying bare what different racial groups said about each other. It said: 'Make no mistake, we are living amidst racism – it's as thick as the humidity in the air.' Today, there are people pretending that racism doesn't exist, that we're in a 'post-racial' era – but that's the most stupid term I've ever heard. If people don't acknowledge that racism is still here, then we're going to go backwards. And that's why *Do the Right Thing* resonates today:

BE NATIONAL ARCHIVE (3) PHOTOEST NYC (2)

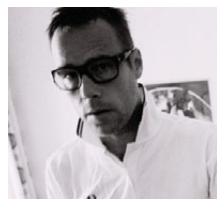


It remains so important because it touches on issues of race and class – and people's perceptions of those things – like no other film
Destiny Ekaragha

FIGHT THE POWER
(Clockwise from left)
Spike Lee as Mookiee,
Rosie Perez as Tina
and Bill Nunn as Radio
Raheem with his
ghetto-blasters in
Do the Right Thing

it uses open dialogue and conversation to bring these issues to the surface.

Destiny Ekaragha's feature debut is the BFI Film Fund-backed *Gone Too Far!*, to be released later this year



Göran Hugo Olsson

When *Do the Right Thing* hit the screens in our local cinema in Stockholm, it changed us for ever. Having

had my formative years in the punk era, it was natural for me to latch onto hip-hop when it emerged in the 1980s. Hip-hop and punk connected not only in their inherent social consciousness, but they both presented a 360-degree formula encompassing a new type of music, fashion, visual language and dance. *Do the Right Thing* filled up the missing gap in hip-hop: film. And at the same time it singlehandedly took cinema into a new,

fiercely contemporary phase. *Do the Right Thing* was the first film in my time that felt real. I'm sure for another generation it might have been Jean-Luc Godard's *À bout de souffle*, but for me that moment arrived when *Do the Right Thing* told me: this is the way.

Göran Hugo Olsson is the director of *Am I Black Enough For You* and *The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975*. His latest film, *Concerning Violence*, will be released later this year



Brandon Harris

Although a Bedford-Stuyvesant street in Brooklyn has recently been [voted to be] renamed 'Do The Right Thing Way', the neighbourhood depicted in Lee's film is long gone. Housing prices have risen, driving many working-class people out of the area; racial anomie has taken on more coded, insidious

forms; and nobody wears Jackie Robinson jerseys or listens to Chuck D for the hell of it anymore. Despite the still-relevant, seemingly ripped-from-the-headlines quality of the film's climax – dead black body at the feet of culpable white cops – the dominant narrative of the space has changed. In fact, the Bed-Stuy of that incendiary film may never really have existed. Was its kaleidoscopic ensemble – its representational melting pot – the reality of those central Brooklyn streets at the time? I'm not so sure anymore. That particular slice of Bed-Stuy may not have been overrun by crack, poverty and disinvestment – to speak nothing of more common kinds of predatory policing than the death of Radio Raheem suggests – but to watch Lee's operatic and invigorating film is to encounter their erasure. Why did Lee choose to do this? You'd have to ask him, but I have some suspicion that given the film's already strident racial politics, an accurate depiction of the inner-city streetlife of the era – which Lee tackled with greater verisimilitude in 1995's *Clockers* – would have been a bridge too far for the studio, Universal.

Brandon Harris is a professor of film at Purchase College, State University of New York, contributing editor at *Filmmaker Magazine* and director of *Redlegs*



Lyle Owerko

Visually speaking, *Do the Right Thing* remains a blast to the senses, from its heavy use of Dutch angles [in

which the camera is tilted] to the extreme cropping of characters. The film captured the voices, collisions, friction and heat that went down on so many street corners in the larger New York canvas. It drew upon real racial tension, but harnessed the power of hip-hop in a way few, if any, films had done previously. Using Public Enemy's 'Fight the Power' as a jump-off point, it engendered the opinionated nature of rap; the feeling of authority colliding with disaffected youth. The rap music, and the B-girl bop from Rosie Perez, helped to change style, dance and urban expression for a generation to come – it's an attitude that still carries weight in the schoolyards and media of today. *Do the Right Thing* truly established characterisations that people identified with in many ways, from the leaders to the agitators; the peacekeepers to victims. The most iconic character was Radio Raheem – he was a man with a method, who stood out from the pack with defiance and swagger. For better or worse, he became a true metaphor for a generation.

Lyle Owerko is a New York City-based photographer and the author of the book *The Boombax Project*, which is being made into a feature documentary

WHEN THE LIGHTS WENT OUT

At the outset of the First World War, in an era before the birth of feature films and the star system, British cinemas prided themselves on offering a wildly eclectic mix of content – a diversity reflected in the BFI's archive compilation 'A Night at the Cinema in 1914'

By Pamela Hutchinson

In 2014, a trip to the cinema has one focus – the seats fill up for one 90-odd-minute feature film and nothing more. The trailers may be a guilty pleasure, but the adverts lie somewhere between a bore and an annoyance. A short film before the main event is an extremely rare exception. One hundred years ago this was not the case. Punters tripped up to the Hippodrome or the Electric Palace once or twice a week for the sheer joy of cinema itself in all its expanding forms. Tragedy, comedy, history, pastorals... and all for a few pence.

"This is television, basically – Edwardian television," explains Bryony Dixon, curator of silent film at the BFI. But it is TV at its most eye-catching – more Saturday night than midweek daytime, with a pot-pourri of material designed to entice a large crowd. A visit to the cinema in 1914 was a social event too, a chance to catch up with friends, but also an opportunity to find out more about the world beyond your local high street from newsreels and travelogues. And for many young couples, the cinema brought a special kind of social contact and the privacy that comes with darkness, warmth and noise. Says Dixon: "We were a lot younger as a nation then, so there were kids in the cinema and a lot of kids' programming. The kids just want to go to see the funny stuff, and the westerns and the big, popular films coming from America. They endure the news. But Mum and Dad are going there for the news and enduring the comedy."

The nation's ardour for the cinematograph did not cool when the war started: concerns about venturing out at night were countered by the need for news from the continent, and for a little distraction and comfort. The first feature-length films are on the horizon. *The Birth of a Nation* will arrive the following year, offering three hours of action, romance, drama and history – a mixed programme in itself. But right now, audiences are addicted to the pick and mix, and exhibitors are hooked on the

repeat business offered by a programme you could join at any point. Several million Britons visited the cinema each day at this time, says Dixon: "This is becoming a habit – you've got a dozen cinemas opening every week."

Audiences returned so regularly for the novelty of seeing moving pictures combined with the kind of diversity Brits had come to treasure from the music hall and the variety theatre. Even at that early stage, the programme was overhauled twice a week. "It's a point of pride that there's no padding," says Dixon. "It's all new, it's all fresh, it's all exciting."

A new release from the BFI, *A Night at the Cinema in 1914*, aims to recreate this more pluralistic big-screen experience, one pitched far from the monomania of today's feature presentations. The 85-minute programme combines all that was best, and most genre-defyingly generous, about the early days of the movies. So you'll find an unexpectedly topical travelogue, Emmeline Pankhurst protesting at Buckingham Palace, animated anti-German propaganda, a classic serial, Charlie Chaplin and a singing Indian rajah.

Variety was the essence of cinematic life in 1914: no two screenings could be the same, because the venues provided their own music, whether from a single pianist, or a full band occupying the orchestra pit of a grand purpose-built cinema. Stephen Horne has been tasked with recording just one musical accompaniment for the programme. Like his predecessors, he will be combining improvisation with a library of musical snippets. "With the newsreels, for example, with specific familiar faces in them, I might throw in a musical reference," he says. "Typically I don't try to recreate the music that may have been played at the time a film was made. I strive for a different kind of authenticity – by attempting to be true to the spirit in which the film was made."

The two most famous items on the running



IN THE MIX
A Night at the Cinema in 1914 aims to offer viewers a representative selection of the incredible variety of films on offer in an era in which British cinemas, such as The Scala in Brixton Hill, London (right, centre), changed their programmes twice a week



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order are the Chaplin short *A Film Johnnie* and the classic serial, *The Perils of Pauline*. The weekly, and increasingly unlikely, trials faced by Pauline, played by Pearl White, were a notoriously successful ploy for drawing audiences back to the cinema. Watching White dangling from a rope attached to a rising hot-air balloon is a strangely nostalgic experience: “It’s the kind of shot that lives on in the memory, in the dim memory of what silent film was about,” says Dixon. “It was the sensation of the age. You’d had [French silent crime film serial] *Fantômas* the previous year, and this is the first big serial coming from America.” She adds: “America is popular: it’s exotic, it’s new and shiny and optimistic. The Brits go for it big time.”

There’s no greater American adventure than making it in Hollywood, and the exploits of a Brit in the fun factory are dramatised in *A Film Johnnie*. In this short, our hero falls for a leading lady at the flicks and tracks her down to the studio, where riotous hilarity ensues. At this point Chaplin is still new to the movie biz – this is only his sixth appearance – but soon, star power like his will prove to be a far greater popular phenomenon than Pauline’s predicaments.

In the postwar future, box offices will live or die by bankable names and genres, but in 1914 the attractions are less easy to quantify. Within the actuality footage, the programme contains such simple modern pleasures as an aviation display, complete with ‘looping the loop’, but inevitably there are more serious issues at play. Pankhurst’s appearance on screen is no accident: the suffragettes knew how to capitalise on the new mass medium, inviting newsreel cameramen to every public event they held – or invaded. Pictures of the dogs that Ernest Shackleton had recruited for his voyage across Antarctica were sure to appeal to animal-loving Britons, and also help soothe the still-fresh news of Captain Scott’s death at the South Pole. The makers of a travelogue called *Egypt and Her Defenders* have struck on a news angle too – with scenes of Lord Kitchener inspecting British troops gaining prominence in the final edit, among the pyramids and camels. And with 21st-century hindsight, a snippet of two Boy Scouts playing at soldiers gathers a painful poignancy. The Scouts are not much younger than the men who would enlist to fight over the following four years.

Once war had been declared in August, news footage was bound to attract an audience, even if it was distressing to watch. A newsreel here of German troops marching through the wreckage of the Belgian town of Leuven is still chilling. But the cinema could also offer reassurance, with staged scenes of our brave boys tucking in to a hot Christmas dinner at the Front. “That is for Mum, knowing that little Johnny is eating well,” explains Dixon. And the tone, and content, is typical. “There is almost no footage of soldiers during 1914 where they’re not eating. It was a big draw, why some people actually go to volunteer – three square meals a day has always been a massive attraction. They always show them eating and larking around in beautifully organised camps with nicely pitched tents. No fighting, no mess or confusion.”

Photo opportunities couldn’t take the sting out of war entirely, of course. But as ever, comedy was a powerful weapon, giving punters the chance to laugh at the things that frighten them the most. *General French’s Contemptible*



There is almost no footage of soldiers during 1914 where they’re not eating. It was a big draw, why some people go to volunteer – three square meals a day

HEAT AND DUST
The travelogue *Egypt and Her Defenders* was given a topical spin with the inclusion of scenes of Lord Kitchener inspecting British troops, alongside vistas of pyramids and camels

Little Army is an animated short by Lancelot Speed that unfolds into a full-throttle comic attack on the enemy. “The idea is to ridicule the Germans and Kaiser Bill and to say how brilliant we are, so we’re just seen thrashing the hell out of them,” says Dixon. And there are jokes? “There are lots of jokes, the usual anti-German stuff – sausage jokes, mainly.”

Fred Evans knew more about music-hall humour than most, born into a family of comedians, and keeping the clowning tradition alive on film in the 200-plus irreverent ‘Pimple’ movies. “They would spoof anything in the news, including the war, every film that came out and any genre of theatre or songs or situations – anything they could think of,” Dixon says. “They don’t have much money, they’re banging these out at the rate of a couple a week.” Naturally, in 1914, spy films were in, so here we have *Lieutenant Pimple and the Stolen Submarine*: rough and ready, but uproariously absurd.

Pure humour can be found in a timeless British classic called *Daisy Doodad’s Dial*, in which Florence Turner contorts her face and riles her husband in a deathless skit. “What isn’t funny about making stupid faces? You can play along, you can do it yourself and it still makes me laugh,” says Dixon.

Just as absurd, and with an even greater call for audience participation is a Cecil Hepworth short called *The Rollicking Rajah*. But the rajah conceals a secret called a ‘Vivaphone’. “This is a decade and a half before *The Jazz Singer* and the arrival of the talkies, and it’s a sound film,” explains Dixon. “There’s a ten-inch wax disc with the soundtrack on it and it synchronises with the film via an electromagnet.” The rajah is voiceless, sadly: his disc has long since disappeared, but the sheet music exists. This is a song film, and it was surely to be hoped that the audience would supplement the recorded sound with their own voices, while the band took a well-earned break.

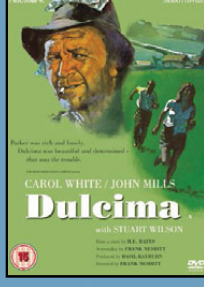
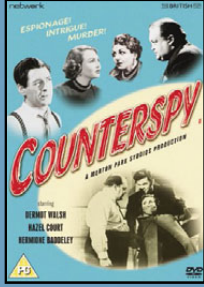
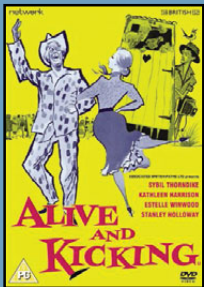
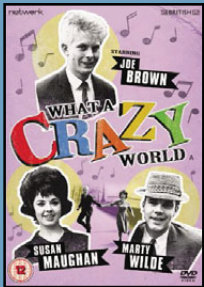
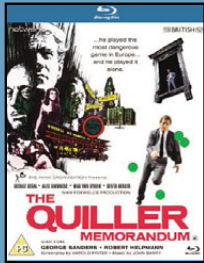
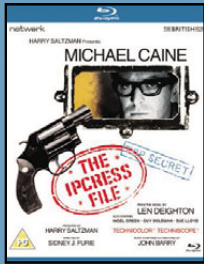
And if 2014 crowds are moved to sing along, pull faces, laugh or gasp, the past century will seem very short indeed. 📽



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THE BRITISH FILM

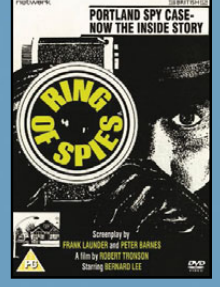
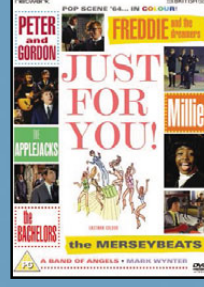
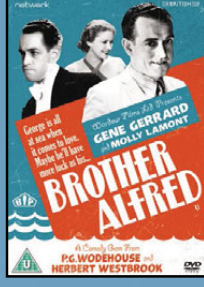
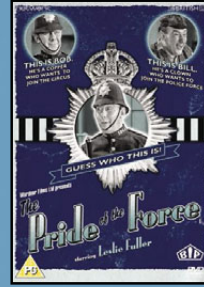
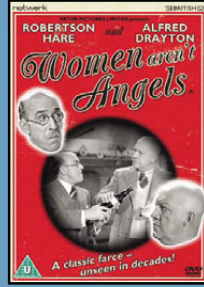
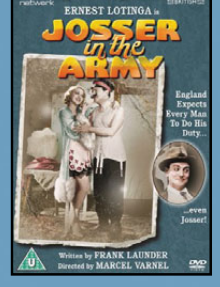
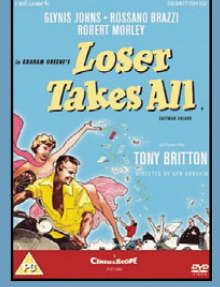
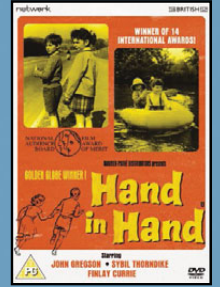


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THE FIFTH GENERATION

The first directors to graduate from Beijing's Film Academy after the repression of the Cultural Revolution had ended, China's convention-busting New Wave blazed on to the world stage with films that shook up the old order of communist cinema. **Michael Berry** explores the evolution of the post-Mao generation, from the avant-garde spirit of early films such as *The Horse Thief* through to controversial epics like *Farewell My Concubine* and *To Live*, to the big-budget fantasies of *Hero* and *House of Flying Daggers*. Overleaf, **Nick James** and **James Bell** outline the key films



A term generally used to describe the collective of filmmakers who graduated from Beijing's Film Academy in 1982, the so-called 'Fifth Generation' was one of a series of waves of Chinese directors identified by critics as a handy way to demarcate chronological periods in Chinese cinema. The 'First Generation' refers to the pioneering Chinese filmmakers active from the birth of film to the end of the 1920s; the 'Second Generation' includes the leftist directors of the 1930s and 40s; the 'Third Generation' were those filmmakers who came of age in the 1950s and helped define the style of Chinese communist cinema in the lead-up to the Cultural Revolution; and the 'Fourth Generation' incorporates those directors who were trained in the 1960s but unable to work until Mao's death cleared the way in 1976.

As the first filmmakers to graduate from the Film Academy after its reopening in 1978 following the Cultural Revolution, the Fifth Generation were educated amid the age of openness of the early Reform Era. The combination of their personal experiences growing up during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) with the diverse Western and classical Chinese influences that poured back into China with the Open Door Policy's liberalisation helped make up the Fifth Generation's unique background, and set them on a path to rewrite the history of Chinese cinema.

Looking back on China's cinematic output in the 1980s, the shadow of the Fifth Generation looms large – the bold cinematic language, visual gestures and narrative innovations of filmmakers like Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, Tian Zhuangzhuang, Wu Ziniu and Li Shaohong, as well as the seemingly ubiquitous image of Gong Li, seem to have dominated this pivotal period in the country's film history. The Fifth Generation is frequently described as China's New Wave, and like other cinematic New Waves, they broke conventions and challenged long-standing cinematic forms. They did so not from the margins, but from within the state-controlled studio system itself, using smaller provincial

facilities like Guangxi Film Studio and Xi'an Film Studio (and the tutelage of veteran figures like Wu Tianming) to launch their cinematic initiative. And while many cite titles such as the collective effort *The Red Elephant* (Hong Xiang, 1982), Zhang Junzhao's *The One and the Eight* (Yige he Bage, 1983) and Wu Ziniu's *Bloody Black Valley* (Dixue Heigu, 1984) as the first works in this new movement, 1984's *Yellow Earth* (Huang Tudi) was clearly the game changer.

Yellow Earth borrowed some elements that externally seemed to be left over from the socialist era – a rural setting, a soldier protagonist, attention to the plight of China's peasants, etc – but director Chen Kaige reconfigured these standard tropes in a way that would push Chinese cinema in an entirely new direction. The deceptively simple story, which depicted a soldier in the Red Army travelling to a backwater in Shaanxi province to collect rural folk songs, belied the film's more radical content and form. Part of this new aesthetic vision was the way in which *Yellow Earth* highlighted the natural environment in a manner that served as a homage to traditional Chinese landscape painting by presenting diminutive characters against expansive natural scenes of mountains and valleys. This new cinematic conception of the Chinese landscape – rendered through the very literal domination of the parched yellow earth over the wrinkled, dirty peasants – was further augmented by DP Zhang Yimou's bold techniques and unconventional horizon lines.

Yellow Earth also offered renewed attention to folk beliefs and customs, such as traditional arranged marriage ceremonies and the collective prayer to the Dragon God to bring rain to the sun-split land. Such attention to traditional folk

The Fifth Generation's shadow looms large over the 1980s with its bold cinematic language and narrative innovations

beliefs was largely absent in the atheist world of Chinese socialist cinema. And most striking, although the film featured many signifiers left over from socialist cinema, in *Yellow Earth* they have become detached from their original ideological coding. The soldier protagonist is no longer the idealised communist hero from earlier films, just as the happy, healthy, hardworking peasants from countless socialist films are replaced with a new image dominated by impoverishment and silence. Victims of history, tradition and the harsh natural environment, the characters of *Yellow Earth* are not one-dimensional black-and-white heroes and villains; instead they are imbued with a newfound humanism and a sense of moral ambiguity. Of course, one can also read the film as a larger critique of China's socialist project – the soldier not only collects folk songs, but changes their lyrics into Chinese Communist Party propaganda, at once preserving tradition and destroying it – but more nakedly in the conflict between the Party's utopian dream to 'liberate China' and the soldier's inability to save even a single poor peasant girl from an arranged marriage and certain fate. All of these qualities, including the collaborative spirit between director Chen Kaige, DP Zhang Yimou, art director He Qun and composer Zhao Jiping, helped define what would evolve into a major cinematic movement.

Experiments in form

The critical acclaim and controversy surrounding *Yellow Earth* would help define the initial phase of the Fifth Generation. Many of the movement's early films would also deal with soldier characters – Chen's *The Big Parade* (Da Yuebing, 1986) or Zhang Yimou's *Red Sorghum* (Hong Gaoliang, 1987) – but from an angle that consciously distanced them from socialist realist films dealing with similar themes. The Fifth Generation director who went furthest with his explorations of war was undoubtedly Wu Ziniu, whose series of war films – *Bloody Black Valley*, *The Dove Tree* (Gezi





A revolution in film: 1984's *Yellow Earth* borrowed elements from the socialist era but reconfigured them to push Chinese cinema in a new direction

Shu, 1985), *The Evening Bell* (Wan Zhong, 1989) and *Nanjing 1937* (1995) – imbued the genre with a reflective pacifist spirit.

Even more prevalent was the experimental avant-garde spirit behind many early Fifth Generation films. For Chen Kaige this experimental vision was best articulated in his films *King of the Children* (Haizi Wang, 1987) and *Life on a String* (Bian Zou Bian Chang, 1991). Zhang Yimou alternately experimented with documentary-style aesthetics in *The Story of Qiu Ju* (Qiu Ju Da Guansi, 1992), and formalistic framing – using an art design heavily indebted to symbolism and colour schemes in the allegorical *Ju Dou* (1990) and *Raise the Red Lantern* (Da Hong Denglong Gaogao Gua, 1991).

It was this series of films by Zhang Yimou that helped – perhaps more than those by any other director – put Chinese film on the international map during the 1980s. By the end of the decade, Zhang's films were met with great critical acclaim, received major awards at top festivals, and performed well on the international arthouse circuit. His films from this period, which frequently highlighted the plight of strong female characters struggling against the oppressive patriarchal structure of feudal China, all cast his muse Gong Li in the leading role; over time her image became synonymous with Chinese cinema of this era. Gong Li would also go on to star in other major Fifth Generation films, such as Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* (Ba Wang Bie Ji, 1993) and *Temptress Moon* (Fengyue, 1996).

But arguably the most uncompromising voice of the generation was Tian Zhuangzhuang, who famously referred to his early masterpiece *The Horse Thief* (Dao Mazei, 1986) as a film made for the 21st century. Shot on location in Tibet using sparse dialogue, *The Horse Thief* depicted the life of Rorbu and his young family as they struggle against illness, poverty and the harsh environment. The film was a sharp departure from earlier portrayals of Tibet in Chinese movies, like the 1963 film *Serfs* (Nongnu), instead offering much attention to the rites of Tibetan Buddhism, gorgeous cinematography by Hou Yong and Zhao Fei – two of the Fifth Generation's most talented cameramen – and an aesthetic that alternated between realism and pure visual poetry. Tian's *The Horse Thief*, *On the Hunting Ground* (Liechang Zhasa, 1984) and other early films expressed a bold and challenging vision that resonated with the new literary movements of the decade (the search-for-roots movement, Misty poetry and new avant-garde literature) and provided the single greatest challenge to prescriptive socialist cinematic moulds. Tian would also later go on to serve as a godfather-type figure to many of the younger 'Sixth Generation' filmmakers a decade later.

The experimental thrust of the Fifth Generation, however, did not last. Gradually most of the major voices of the movement gravitated away from the avant garde, moving closer to more commercial cinematic models. DP-turned-director Zhang Yimou always had the strongest commercial instincts among his classmates and seemed to quickly create his own unique filmic model predicated on lavish colours, pre-socialist feudal settings, strong female characters, powerful symbolic elements and the image of



Living history: Zhang Yimou's 1994 epic *To Live* remains banned in China today

Gong Li. Films like *Red Sorghum*, *Ju Dou* and *Raise the Red Lantern* became emblematic of the Fifth Generation itself and in many ways drove other works of the era that tried to emulate Zhang's formula. At the same time, as the movement developed, it became increasingly clear just how tied the group was to the contemporary literary scene, with virtually all of its major works being adaptations from novels by leading writers like Mo Yan, Su Tong, Yu Hua and others. The shift from literary adaptation to original stories would eventually become one of the defining traits that would set the Fifth Generation against the independent-minded Sixth Generation.

Although the collective collaborative spirit that dominated early Fifth Generation works like *The Red Elephant* and *Yellow Earth* gave way as each of the major directors in the movement asserted their individual identities, the Fifth Generation continued to follow similar trends. After a series of soldier- and war-themed films, during the early 1990s the modern historical epic emerged as its genre of choice. One by one, the leading representatives – Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou and Tian Zhuangzhuang – produced, respectively, *Farewell My Concubine*, *To Live* (Huozhe, 1994) and *The Blue Kite* (Lan Fengzheng, 1993), all modern epics beginning in the pre-liberation era and concluding with the horror of the Cultural Revolution. The films also shared a similar fate as they gained solid reviews and good arthouse performance in Europe, Japan and other international

'To Live' and 'The Blue Kite' moved away from allegory to confront the political horrors of modern Chinese history

markets while being banned at home.

Farewell My Concubine, in particular, made waves – it is the only Chinese-language film to have won the Palme d'Or at Cannes and is frequently listed by critics as one of the most influential films in Chinese film history. Adapted from a novel by Hong Kong writer Lilian Lee, produced by former Taiwan martial-arts diva Hsu Feng, and featuring a cast that included leading Chinese mainland stars Gong Li, Ge You and Zhang Fengyi with Hong Kong superstar Leslie Cheung, *Farewell* can also be seen as a clear indicator of the Fifth Generation's deeper pan-Chinese cinematic connections during this period. (*To Live* and other films of this period followed a similar production model.) The story traced several decades in the lives of two Peking opera stars, from their childhood during the Republican period to their fame during the War of Resistance, ultimately building up to their fate under the red flag in the new China. Chen tried to revisit this formula 15 years later with a biopic of opera icon Mei Lanfang in *Forever Enthralled* (Mei Lanfang, 2008), with less successful results. The state's ban of *Farewell* would eventually be rescinded, while *To Live* and *The Blue Kite* remain outlawed in China today. Collectively these three films stand as an important turning point for the Fifth Generation: moving away from allegory to confront the political horrors of modern Chinese history.

A few years later, members of the Fifth Generation would also dabble in more lighthearted urban-themed films, such as *Keep Cool* (You Hua haohao Shuo, 1997), *Happy Times* (Xingfu Shiguang, 2000) and *Together with You* (He Ni zai Yiqi, 2002). Eventually they would turn their talents to a series of lavish big-budget films on Qin Shihuang, the First Emperor of China, from Zhou Xiaowen's *The Emperor's Shadow* (Qinsong,

1996) to Chen Kaige's *The Emperor and the Assassin* (*Jingke Ci Qinwang*, 1998), and culminating with Zhang Yimou's blockbuster *Hero* (*Yingxiong*, 2002).

In the wake of the unprecedented international box-office success of Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (*Wo Hu Cang Long*, 2000), *Hero* would also set in motion a new trend of big-budget *wuxia* fantasy films with pan-Asian casts and impressive martial-arts choreography augmented by state-of-the-art CGI effects. As Fifth Generation directors and their contemporaries tried to duplicate the *Crouching Tiger* model with varying degrees of success in titles like *House of Flying Daggers* (*Shimian Maifu*, 2004), *Curse of the Golden Flower* (*Man Cheng Jindai Huangjinjia*, 2006), *The Promise* (*Wuji*, 2005) and *The Banquet* (*Ye Yan*, 2006), they again demonstrated a collective will, this time no longer dominated by inspired experiments in cinematic form, but rather in their calculated pursuits of a new global model for Chinese cinema. By the time *Curse of the Golden Flower* and *The Promise* paraded their lavish sets, CGI-laden action sequences, convoluted stories and empty emotional excess across the Chinese silver screen, the original spirit that once produced *Yellow Earth* and *Red Sorghum* seemed like a distant memory.

This is an edited extract of Michael Berry's chapter 'The Fifth Generation and the New Cinema of the 1980s', published in the BFI Compendium *Electric Shadows: A Century of Chinese Cinema*, which is out now

1 *The One and the Eight* (Zhang Junzhao, 1983) When the Beijing Film Academy, China's only professional film school, reopened after the Cultural Revolution, 153 students were admitted, and it was this intake who graduated in 1982. After leaving, most were assigned to



The One and the Eight (1983)

work as assistants in China's bigger studios in major cities and towns, but a few were posted to newly established studios in remote backwaters like Guangxi, Kunming and Shenzhen, where there were fewer bureaucratic obstacles and greater opportunities to start work immediately on their own projects. Inevitably, many of their fellow cohort were soon asking to follow them.

It was at Guangxi Film Studio in Nanning, near the border with Vietnam, that the first Fifth Generation films were made. Zhang Junzhao and Zhang Yimou had both been sent to work there and collaborated on the tense *The One and the Eight*, with the former directing and the latter working as DP.

Set in 1939 during the Sino-Japanese war, the story is based on a novel about a political commissar serving with the Communist Eighth

Route Army unit who is suspected of treason by a superior and placed in a chain-gang with eight criminals. The unit comes under attack by the Japanese, and the political commissar inspires his fellow prisoners to demand their freedom so they can join in the fight-back. The film was subsequently accused of defeatism by the Film Bureau and banned, with the original version returned to Guangxi for reshoots.

The One and the Eight's story of resistance to Japanese invaders may have appeared nothing new for cinema in the People's Republic of China (PRC), but in its focus on individuals and in Zhang Yimou's remarkable high-contrast cinematography, it revealed itself as something new aesthetically – the first out of the gate of a major new cinematic movement. (JB)

2 *Yellow Earth* (Chen Kaige, 1984)

Following his graduation in 1982, Chen Kaige was initially assigned to work as an assistant to Fourth Generation director Huang Jianzhong at the Beijing Film Studio, but hearing of the relative freedoms afforded to Zhang Yimou and Zhang Junzhao at Guangxi, he quickly applied to join them. He soon began work on *Yellow Earth*, with Zhang Yimou again taking the DP role.

The 'yellow earth' of the film's title refers to the arid hills of the northern Shaanxi province, an area of particular symbolic importance in China – known as the cradle of Chinese civilisation and, more recently, the place where Mao's Communists ended their Long March of 1935.

The story is set in 1939 and follows a young Eighth Route Army soldier named Gu Qing who travels to a grindingly poor village in Shaanxi from his Communist base in Yan'an. Gu's task is to collect local folk songs that might be adapted into Maoist anthems. He is billeted with a widower and his two children – 12-year-old Cuiqiao and her younger brother Hanhan. The family's initial suspicion of this outsider softens when he involves himself in their work, and his stories of the status afforded to his female comrades in particular inspires Cuiqiao, who discovers that she is to be married off to an older man. When Gu eventually leaves, Cuiqiao pleads with him to take her with him, but he refuses, pledging to return for her the next spring. She tries to follow him, with tragic consequences.

The story is a simple one, but it's the manner of its telling that was so transformative. Zhang Yimou's cinematography roots the characters in the unforgiving landscape that imprisons them, framing shots so that the horizon is only seen at the very top of the screen. Chen's direction, meanwhile, moves the film beyond social realism by drawing from the folk culture, songs and paintings of the Shaanxi peasants whose lives it depicts, and by conveying his characters' unspoken thoughts through expressions and reactions:

The film premiered to a rapturous reception at the Hong Kong International Film Festival in 1985, which led to invitations from other international festivals, disquieting the Film Bureau, which temporarily withdrew it from distribution in 1986. But by then observant international audiences were already taking a keen notice. (JB)



Folk hero: Chen Kaige's *Yellow Earth* (1984) tells the story of a soldier collecting songs in a poor village

3 The Black Cannon Incident (Huang Jianxin, 1985)

Released during the second phase of Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms aimed at reducing the level of state control and introducing a measure of free-market ideology to China, Huang Jianxin's barbed tragicomic debut had a cutting satirical edge that would have been difficult to miss, and the absurdities it depicts all too familiar to many Chinese viewers. The film follows the Kafkaesque sequence of events that results from the interception of an innocent, if somewhat cryptic, telegram by a factory engineer and translator named Zhao Juxin (Liu Zifeng), asking a friend if he has his missing 'black cannon' Chinese chess piece.

Zhao is placed under official investigation by the factory bosses, who seize on innocuous details in his CV – like being unmarried, being able to speak German or having been raised as a Catholic – to support their suspicions against him. They reassign him without explanation to a job in the maintenance department, while they conduct a series of ever more pointless meetings to decide how best to resolve the matter. The situation becomes still more absurd when the bosses find that they need Zhao to translate when a visiting German expert arrives to install new machinery.

Huang showed real political daring in pillorying the old Party men standing in the way of modernisation through their own self-interest. The satirical tone, which would have been unthinkable even a few years before, is matched by a bold invention in the film's design, cinematography and use of music. Huang has had an unbroken directing career since, though today he can also be found producing popular multiplex fare, a marker of the changes in China's film industry since the 1980s. (JB)

4 Swan Song (Zhang Zeming, 1985)

Among the less well known of the early Fifth Generation films is Zhang Zeming's intensely felt and very pessimistic debut feature, which charts the trials that befall a Guangzhou-based Cantonese musician and composer named Ou Laoshu (Kong Xianzhu) during his life. It begins in the pre-Cultural Revolution early 1960s, when he is unable to get his music performed following the public revelation of his opium habit soon after the PRC was founded in 1949, continues through his later years, when he is reduced to coaching an amateur orchestra of blind street musicians, and ends with a coda that takes place after his death. Ou Laoshu is intent on preserving the music of southern China's Guangdong province, but finds his efforts rejected by Guanzai (Chen Rui), the musician son in whom he invests all of his hopes, who instead runs off as a Red Guard, returning ten years later as a delinquent who tries to buy himself illegal passage to Hong Kong. The indignities follow Ou Laoshu into his grave; after his death his music is turned into a travesty of a piano concerto by his daughter.

Zhang Zeming's own early career had its share of disappointments: his formal education had been cut short by the Cultural Revolution, and he was sent to work on a rubber plantation on Hainan Island (like the son in the film, Zhang himself defied his own father, and



Global hit: Zhang Yimou's *Red Sorghum* (1987) introduced the world to Gong Li

'Red Sorghum' is coarse and violent, bawdy and passionate, and features dazzling imagery and sumptuous symbolism

became an incipient delinquent during the Cultural Revolution). He applied to join the Beijing Film Academy when it reopened, but was twice rejected, and instead went to work at the Pearl River Film Studio as a production assistant. Undeterred, he continued to write his own scripts – including *Swan Song*, based on a novel by Kong Jiesheng – and impressed studio heads invited him to make it as part of an initiative to encourage young filmmakers.

The film was well-reviewed by international critics, but though Zhang has gone on to have a career moving between feature films, television, documentary and adverts, none has quite lived up to the promise of his haunting debut. (JB)

5 The Horse Thief (Tian Zhuangzhuang, 1986)

Before he made this seminal work, Tian Zhuangzhuang had already acquired a reputation as a troublesome filmmaker for the authorities through his co-directed short film *Our Corner* (1980), and children's film *The Red Elephant* (1982). Their solution was to send Tian away



Huang Jianxin's *The Black Cannon Incident* (1985)

from the main centres of production, but this plan backfired spectacularly because being out of the way at Xi'an Film Studio enabled him – like Zhang Yimou, Zhang Junzhao and Chen Kaige at Guangxi – to avoid supervision. Having made an enigmatic documentary-like film about hunting customs in inner Mongolia *On the Hunting Ground* (1986), which garnered critical attention though no commercial success, the director was emboldened to make the groundbreaking *The Horse Thief*.

Though there is no overt political content to this gorgeously visual film of stunning vistas and spare dialogue, the entire piece, with its focus on Tibetan religious and folk traditions and on the centrality of the family, would be accused of elitism and pandering to Western tastes.

The first two scenes establish and distil the film's themes with terrific poetic force. It is a time of famine in Tibet as we watch the ritual of 'sky burial' in which the recently deceased's body is left to be feasted on by vultures, which are regarded as spiritual dispatchers of the dead to heaven. Immediately after, we're with Norbu (Rigzin Teshang), the titular horse thief, stealing into a campsite at night with his sword drawn, while his son unhitches the horses. When the owners are woken by guard dogs, Norbu collapses the tent and gallops off with the booty before anyone can stop him. Norbu is not proud of what he does, but it is a matter of survival for his family and clan. When he's caught stealing from a monastery, however, the clan shames and expels him, with terrible consequences.

Tian Zhuangzhuang was forced to change the ostensible period of the film from the present to the 1920s, but the film was still banned. Only ten prints were struck, but somehow one was smuggled out of China where it was greeted as a masterpiece. (NJ)

6 Red Sorghum (Zhang Yimou, 1987)

By the time he came to make his directorial debut with *Red Sorghum*, Zhang Yimou had

already established himself as one of the key figures in the Fifth Generation via his work as a cinematographer – not to mention his role as an actor in Fourth Generation director Wu Tianming's *Old Well*. *Red Sorghum* marked an astonishingly confident and distinctive debut, which immediately placed him in the front rank of new directors.

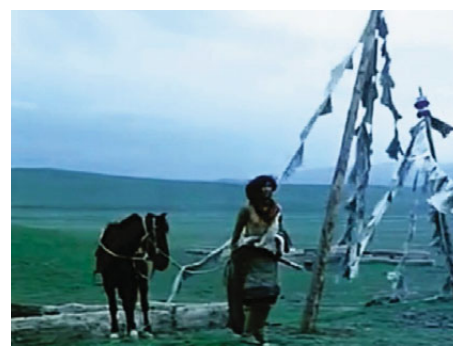
The film is set in Shandong province in the late 1920s and 30s, and adapted from short stories by Mo Yan. An unseen narrator begins to describe the meeting of his grandparents, but says that their meeting has long since become a local myth, its precise truth to be doubted. Indeed, the film that follows is imbued with the vitality of a peasant folk tale. It is frequently coarse and violent, bawdy and passionate, and features dazzlingly overblown imagery and symbolism, and sumptuous cinematography by Gu Changwei. It was also the film that introduced the world to Gong Li, then a student at the Beijing Drama Academy, and soon to become the most internationally recognised Chinese actress of all. She would become Zhang Yimou's muse – and, for a time, his wife – on several more films, among them some of the defining works of the Fifth Generation.

Gong plays Jiu'er (known as 'Nine'), an 18-year-old married off to the leprous older head of a wine distillery. While she is being transported through a field of sorghum to meet her new husband, the party is attacked by a bandit named Sanpao, but he is fought off by Yu, one

of the sedan chair carriers (played by an equally memorable Jiang Wen). There is an immediate and obvious sexual spark between Yu and Nine, who we learn are the narrator's grandparents and who soon consummate their relationship after she refuses the advances of her husband. When her husband dies, Nine – now pregnant with Yu's son – takes over the running of the distillery, reviving its fortunes until the arrival of brutal Japanese invaders leads to tragedy. Zhang and Gong would go on to make arguably more refined films, but *Red Sorghum* remains a formidably auspicious declaration of intent and talent. (JB)

7 King of the Children (Chen Kaige, 1987)

In a long thatched hut set high upon red earth in China's Yunnan province a city-bred youth of no schooling has been co-opted from working in the fields to teach the children of local peasants. An eccentric prone to laughter, Lao Gar (Xie Yuan) is a typical victim of the Cultural Revolution, prey to a twist of bureaucratic happenstance. Nervous at first, he sets about his allotted task, making his pupils copy out a lesson from the sole Maoist schoolbook deep into the night by candlelight. Once Lao Gar gets to know the children better, however – and inspired by semi-visionary encounters with a local cowherd – he encourages them to write about their own experiences and thereby acquire some self esteem. When news of his unique approach reaches the authorities, of course, he is relieved of his post.



Tian Zhuangzhuang's *The Horse Thief* (1986)

Exquisitely shot in widescreen from low angles that monumentalise much, not least the children and the vast forested valleys of Yunnan, *King of the Children* is a direct allegory of the situation faced by the Fifth Generation filmmakers, and their desire to revitalise the imaginary in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, with Lao Gar and his pedagogical ambitions making an obvious avatar for Chen Kaige himself. Some critics have claimed *King of the Children* romanticises the plight of the peasants by capturing the beauty of their surroundings while ignoring the lifestyles of the children's parents, and certainly the much-vaunted realism of the piece now looks somewhat filtered. Yet so intricate and careful an allegory is it that its power to move and, indeed, educate remains intact. (NJ) ➔



Bad education: Chen Kaige's *King of the Children* (1987) presents a direct allegory of the predicament facing the Fifth Generation

8 *Ju Dou* (Zhang Yimou, 1990) Zhang Yimou's third feature as director was clearly conceived as a companion piece to *Red Sorghum*, insofar as it explores a love affair between a virile young man and a young woman unhappily married to an older husband. But where in the earlier film the relationship is crushed by historical events, here its gradual undoing – and the film's claustrophobic, sultry mood – owes more to the guilt-laden, *noirish* fatalism of James M. Cain. Its setting in a dyeing works also allows Zhang to take his use of visual symbolism and expressive colour to new heights.

As in *Red Sorghum*, Gong Li plays the beautiful young bride, this time as Ju Dou. She has been sold to the monstrous and impotent Jinshan, who viciously beats her – as he has done to his previous two wives, killing both – for failing to provide him with a son and heir. The film is set almost entirely within the labyrinthine confines of the dyeing works, at which Jinshan employs his nephew Tianqing. Overcome by lust on first seeing Ju Dou, Tianqing secretly watches her through a peephole as she bathes. After one particularly unendurable beating, and knowing that Tianqing is watching, Ju Dou turns to display the bruising on her body in a moment that is both a cry for help and a sexual display that was shockingly bold for Chinese cinema at the time. Soon after, when Jinshan is out, the two begin an affair that results in Ju Dou becoming pregnant with a son. Ju Dou and Tianqing's affair continues

The verve of the filmmaking and the occasional delicacy of the acting makes 'Farewell My Concubine' unmissable

furtively, but the couple are emboldened after Jinshan is crippled in an accident, and soon cease any attempt to conceal their love – or the true identity of their son Tianbai's father.

Production of *Ju Dou* began before the events in Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989, and was completed in the aftermath. The film was banned by Chinese authorities, who demanded unspecified cuts. One source of unease was surely the film's unabashed sensuality, partly suggested through the symbolic and visually stunning play of colour and light in the fabrics, machinery and dyes in the workshop, and also more unambiguously in the performances and dialogue. But the film also inevitably invites allegorical readings, however incomplete, through Ju Dou and Tianqing's challenging of societal and gender restrictions (the film may be set in the pre-communist 1920s, but the forces that damn them carried clear contemporary resonance), and through the revelation of Tianbai as a bad seed who ultimately kills both of his 'fathers' in an Oedipal fury.

Ju Dou was released in the West in 1990 and helped confirm Zhang Yimou's status as

flag-bearer for the Fifth Generation, as well as Gong Li's position as the new 'face' of Chinese cinema – the film was nominated for both the Palme d'Or and the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language film. Gong and Zhang's international success continued through their next two collaborations – *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991), which cast her in the familiar role of a young bride facing down a Bluebeard-like older husband, and *The Story of Qiu Ju* (1992), in which she instead plays a pregnant peasant woman seeking justice for her husband, a farmer who has been beaten up by the village chief. (JB)

9 *Bloody Morning* (Li Shaohong, 1992)

Along with such filmmakers as Hu Mei, director of *Army Nurse* (1985) and *Far from War* (1987), Peng Xiaolian, director of *Women's Story* (1987) and Li Miaomiao, director of *Women on the Long March* (1987) and *Stories of the Voyage* (1985), Li Shaohong is one of a number of major female directors of the Fifth Generation. She completed her debut feature *Bloody Morning* in 1990, but it was deemed far too incendiary in the immediate post-Tiananmen period, and banned for a couple of years. The film is a loose retelling of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novel *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, and follows the investigation of the murder of a teacher in a desperately poor village in northern China. Formally innovative, the build-up to the crime is revealed via a series of flashbacks, which piece together the



Three's a crowd: Chen Kaige's magisterial epic *Farewell My Concubine* (1993) follows a pair of Peking opera singers and the woman who comes between them

fragmented memories of various villagers who are forced to testify at the inquest into the killing.

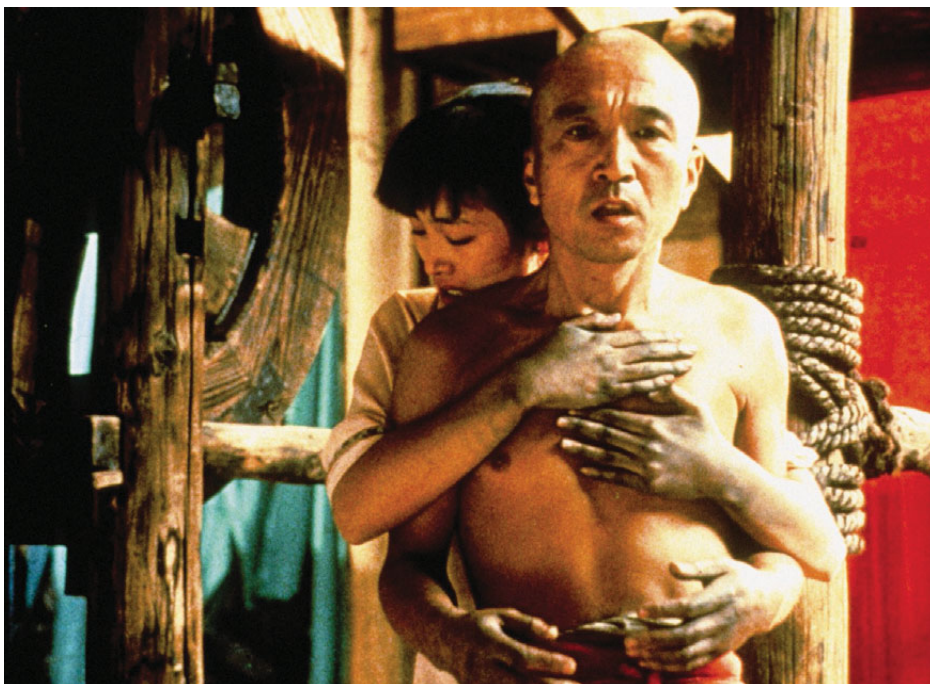
What the film really captures is the intense claustrophobia, traditions and enduring superstitions that govern village life in such remote regions of China, the physical space of the village a barren landscape of frozen paths and joyless peasant houses. Where in the Marquez novel the victim is a wealthy man, in Li's version the crucial alteration is to make him an intellectual, viewed with suspicion by the other villagers. *Bloody Morning* is now recognised by critics as one of the finest of all the films made by a member of the Fifth Generation, but remains little seen in the West.

Li Shaohong has gone on to make a number of other well-received films, including the visually sumptuous *Blush* (1995), which is told through the eyes of two prostitutes 'liberated' against their will in 1949, and the successful contemporary-set films *Baober in Love* (2004) and *Stolen Life* (2005), as well as working in television on the 2010 series *A Dream in Red Mansions*. (JB)

10 *The Blue Kite* (Tian Zhuangzhuang, 1993) Tian Zhuangzhuang's most devastating political film could hardly be more of an aesthetic contrast to the haunting visual beauty of *The Horse Thief*, nor could it be more condemnatory of Maoism. The film begins in 1953 with a wedding between Lin Shaolong (Cunxin Pu) and Chen Shujuan (Liping Lü) that will eventually produce the son, Tietou, who is our narrator. The death of Stalin forces a postponement on the wedding, which is a portent of patriarchal failure to come as the boy's father figures shift in three chapters from 'Father', to 'Uncle' to 'Stepfather', each phase matching shifts in party political emphasis and each bleaker and more emotionally closed than the preceding one. Lin, a librarian, buys Tietou the blue kite, which immediately gets stuck in a tree. He has been reported for criticising the Communist Party, a fact that leads to him being named a 'rightist' merely to fill a quota. Sent off to a labour camp, he is killed by a falling tree. Chen Shujuan, whose brothers and sister are ruined in turn by bureaucratic machinations, then marries Li Guodong (Xuejian Li), one of Lin's colleagues, whose health eventually fails due to malnutrition. Lastly, mother and son move in with a party member, the stepfather (Baochang Guo), whose own fate will soon be hanging in the balance.

Banned on completion by the government for its political 'leanings', *The Blue Kite* is a harrowing realist tale of communal and individual fortitude in the face of imposed misery, all based on true stories. (NJ)

11 *Farewell My Concubine* (Chen Kaige, 1993) If one needed a checklist of the elements that together form the international audience's idea of the Fifth Generation, one can find them all in Chen Kaige's magisterial epic about life in a Peking opera troupe, set mostly during the whirlwind transitional years between the Japanese invasion of China in the 1930s and the coming of Mao's Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. It features the two most iconic associated actors, with Leslie Cheung as Cheng Dieyi, a frail male performer of female roles, and Gong



Dangerous liaisons: Zhang Yimou's *Ju Dou* (1990) explores a couple's illicit love affair

Li as Juxian, a prostitute turned concubine and Cheng's rival for the love of his co-singer Duan Xiaolou (Zhang Fengyi). Characteristically, the film is a sumptuous evocation of a recently vanished era full of the traditional gloomy lantern-lit rooms, with the gaudy and delightful traditional costumes of the opera stars contrasting with the simple black clothes of people on the streets. Confident, slow-reveal pacing allots plenty of time to the tortuous childhood training of the opera troupe before we see our leads as grown-ups. As well as cruel twists of fate, the film has the requisite sense of veiled emotion, which is only allowed free rein through the formal gestures of the performers on stage. The triangular melodrama, climaxing in forced betrayals, is steeped in the need to achieve political allegory without seeming to, and to be simultaneously understated and obvious. All this interplay builds momentum and I can attest to the film's power on release in the West in 1993 when it was the only Chinese-language film ever to win the Palme d'Or. Looking at it again 20 years on, one is perhaps less easily swept away by the *mise-en-scène*, but the verve of the filmmaking and the occasional delicacy of the acting still makes this unmissable. (NJ)



Tian Zhuangzhuang's *The Blue Kite* (1993)

12 *The Emperor's Shadow* (Zhou Xiaowen, 1996)

When asked about the origins of his epic about power and friendship set in the second century BC, Zhou Xiaowen has said, "I don't like history, I just like the buildings, the palaces, the dresses." Yet *The Emperor's Shadow* is important politically for two reasons: at the time the star-studded feature was the most expensive film ever shot on the Chinese mainland; and it was withdrawn from distribution after a few weeks when the authorities came to believe that its theme – about the struggle between the Emperor Ying Zheng (Jiang Wen) and his one-time itinerant boyhood friend Gao Jianli (Ge You), a musician, over the composition of a national anthem – might be alluding to present-day politics and government interference in the arts.

They had a point – you can't mistake, for instance, the symbolism of the film's opening, in which the previous emperor, on his deathbed, has all manner of bells of different sizes tipped into a waterfall and declares that henceforth music will be banned from the empire. The 1996 ban on Zhou Xiaowen's film, however, was lifted eight months after it was imposed.

The D.W. Griffith-like scale of the imperial monuments and displays is breathtaking; the compositions, which perhaps draw on Kurosawa and Leone, are dynamic and on a satisfyingly grand scale; and if the melodrama itself is a thing of brash and noisily obvious momentum, it succeeds through exoticism and casual terror in keeping our fascination right through to the end. (NJ) Ⓢ

i *The One and the Eight, Yellow Earth, The Black Cannon Incident, The Horse Thief, Red Sorghum, King of the Children, The Blue Kite, Bloody Morning and Farewell My Concubine* are screening at BFI Southbank, London, in August as part of the season 'A Century of Chinese Cinema'

PROFILE

LOOKING FROM THE OUTSIDE IN

The pioneering figure in Japan's recent surge of female filmmakers, Kawase Naomi is still a distinctive, sometimes controversial voice

By Jasper Sharp

Japanese cinema is typically viewed as a masculine domain. Until the 1980s, the studio system's structure presented a formidable barrier for women hoping to enter the industry in a creative capacity. Barring Japan's first woman director, Sakane Tazuko, who made a single feature in 1936, the long-lost *Hatsu sugata*, the few who chalked up a directing credit generally hailed from an acting background.

Only in the past decade have Japanese women filmmakers made real headway. Their swelling ranks and the acclaim, both domestic and international, for such names as Nishikawa Miwa (*Dear Doctor*, 2009; *Dreams for Sale*, 2012), Tanada Yuki (*Moon & Cherry*, 2004; *The Cowards Who Looked to the Sky*, 2012), Ogigami Naoko (*Kamome Diner*, 2006) and Yokohama Satoko (*Bare Essence of Life*, 2009) suggest an industry keen to redress past imbalances.

The trailblazer for this new wave, although also an artist with a distinctively individual voice and agenda, has been Kawase Naomi. While recent female directors have downplayed gender's

bearing on their work, Kawase has kept it at the forefront, with the naturalistic celebrations of the universality of womanhood of her dramatic features balanced by deeply personal documentary works in which she has regularly turned the camera on herself and her family.

Though she remains overlooked in English-language territories, Kawase has been a fixture at Cannes since her 1997 *Caméra d'Or* win, aged 27, for her feature debut *Suzaku* (1997), a portrait of family life in a remote village community beset by mass depopulation due to the decline of its traditional cedar-logging industry. Ten years later, she received the Grand Prix for *The Mourning Forest* (2007), about the developing bond between a retirement home careworker and one of her wards. This was followed by the *Carrosse d'Or* lifetime achievement award in 2009, the same year that another of films, *Nanayo* (2008), in which a young woman embarks on a voyage of self-discovery while vacationing in Thailand, cropped up in the Cannes market. Her latest feature, *Still the Water* (2014), a coming-of-age romance set on a subtropical Japanese island, played in Competition this year, as did *Hanezu* in 2011, a contemporary adaptation of a Bandô Masako novel shot on 16mm.

Kawase's recurring presence at Cannes indicates her stature within a certain transnational festival subculture. Since 1999, there have been retrospectives in Italy,

Switzerland and France; European co-productions within her *oeuvre* include *The Mourning Forest* and *Still the Water*, and stretch back to *Kya Ka Ra Ba A* (2001), a documentary self-portrait chronicling her grieving process after the death of her father.

Yet in Japan, Kawase remains marginal, both critically and commercially. Still based in the ancient capital of Nara, where she was born, far from the filmmaking hub of Tokyo, her resolutely independent stance has rendered her very much an outsider in the industry. The mountainous Nara prefecture is an enduring presence in much of her work, and *Suzaku* represented a real breath of fresh air when it first appeared. With majestic landscapes surrounding a real-life village, the film unfolds in two periods, separated by a 15-year gap during which a proposed railway tunnel project that might have provided an economic boost to the area fails to materialise. This conspicuous absence might be viewed as a metaphor for the Japanese film industry of this period. With the studio system struggling during the 1980s and domestic box-office takings declining after the bubble, for much of the 90s

An outsider in Tokyo, Kawase focuses on family life and rural traditions, often putting her own emotions or body before the lens



Trailblazer: Kawase has created both naturalistic celebrations of the universality of womanhood and deeply personal documentary works

PHOTOGRAPH BY GETTY IMAGES

Japanese cinema's heyday seemed far behind it.

Then suddenly, in 1997, Japan was back on the map, with Imamura Shôhei's (shared) Palme d'Or at Cannes for the *The Eel* and Kitano Takeshi's Golden Lion at Venice for *Hana-bi*. Suô Masayuki's *Shall We Dance?* unexpectedly became America's top-grossing Asian film ever, while Miyazaki Hayao's *Princess Mononoke* became Japan's highest-grossing domestic release. All this and *Suzaku*'s surprise Cannes triumph. For the first time in years, people began talking about possible futures for the industry, and more feminine ones at that.

Kawase's earliest filmmaking hints at how remarkable her arrival as an internationally-feted auteur seemed to local audiences, and at what still distinguishes her work: low-key depictions of everyday family life and rural traditions with a distinctive feminine subjectivity, steeped in Buddhist themes of cycles of regeneration and rebirth.

Born in 1969, Kawase began making 8mm films at the Osaka School of Visual Arts (then the School of Photography), graduating in 1989. Rather than cinephilia, it was her discovery of the camera as a tool for articulating thoughts and feelings and connecting with the world that informed her earliest work, as their titles – *The Concretisation of These Things Flying Around Me* (1988) and *I Focus on That which Interests Me* (1988) – amply spell out. On the other hand, works like *Papa's Ice Cream* (1988) and *My Solo Family* (1989) point towards the more autobiographical dimension of her *oeuvre*, evoking a difficult childhood in which she was abandoned by her parents and raised by a great aunt.

This hapless upbringing informs *Embracing* (1992), an emotional journey back into the mists of Kawase's childhood that ends with her making phone contact with her estranged father, and *Katatsumori* (1994), a touching portrait of the elderly relative who took her in. The two films sit between personal diary and experimental cinema, almost painfully candid, stylistically guileless, surprisingly elegant. Vivid invocations of the everyday as filtered through their maker's subjective experiences, they unfurl like assembled fragments of home movies, hypnotic collages of mundane suburban landscapes, trees and other organic forms, simple household objects and interiors: inanimate objects brought to life by the animating force of the camera, inscribed in natural light in the raw grainy texture of 8mm stock and counterpointed by a sparing use of non-diegetic sound. (*Katatsumori* was later blown up to 16mm for theatrical exhibition.)

"I see myself as some sort of axis connecting these images and sounds," Kawase has said. She captures the timeless spirit of place through the relationship between landscapes and the communities that live and work within them. *The Weald* (1997), for instance, which saw her returning to the area where *Suzaku* was filmed to document the ageing community still making their livings as loggers, makes evocative use of the textures of 8mm, 16mm and video.

With her early 8mm works, Kawase found herself a major player in the amateur *jishu eiga* ('self-produced film') scene that emerged during the 1980s. After *Embracing* won a FIPRESCI Prize Special Mention and *Katatsumori* won the



Hotaru (2000)

New Asian Currents Award of Excellence at Yamagata in 1995, she collaborated with another rising star of independent Japanese art cinema, Kore-eda Hirokazu, making a series of 8mm filmed correspondences that were exhibited as *This World* (1996). The prizes also led to her meeting Sentô Takenori, her future husband and producer of the 35mm work with which her international career would be launched, *Suzaku*.

The pressure Kawase faced to be seen not only as an ambassador for Japan but also for Japanese women was compounded by her engagement and marriage to Sentô in 1997. She was the subject of intense media attention in Japan, with less interest shown in the film than its maker. Kawase felt like "a panda in a zoo", unable to focus on future projects. Then came the inevitable backlash as local critics began to question what the French saw in Kawase's impressionistic depictions of quotidian life. Work and marriage proved incompatible for a maverick producer based in Tokyo and the promising filmmaker whose heart belonged in Nara, and was keen not to be seen as just another protégée.

The break-up that led to their divorce in March 2000 occurred during the production of a pivotal work in Kawase's filmography, fuelling much of its content. Beautifully shot in the villages and farmlands of Nara over a year and, like *Suzaku*, improvised by a mostly nonprofessional cast, *Hotaru* (2000), meaning 'firefly', depicts the intense, turbulent relationship of two emotionally scarred people, a striptease artiste abandoned by her mother as a child and a taciturn yet sensitive artisan working



Shara (2003)

with traditional ceramics, who has his own emotional skeletons. Running at 164 minutes, the film premiered at Rotterdam but received a modest release in Japan. Sentô's production company folded in November 2001 after a volley of high-profile flops, highlighting the absence of a domestic market for the meditative productions favoured by European festivals.

Kawase's willingness to place herself or an obvious stand-in at the centre of her films, and the nakedness with which she has used her art to work through her own obsessions, go against the grain with local audiences. Her 2003 drama *Shara*, in which she plays the hard-working pregnant mother of a family suffering from a son's disappearance, ends on an upbeat note; soon after, Kawase gave birth to her first child. She went further in *Tarachime* (2006), a 43-minute documentary record of her pregnancy culminating in the on-camera birth of her second son. Less palatable was *Letter from a Yellow Cherry Blossom* (2002), an account of the dying days of photography critic Nishii Kazuo, in which her presence was rather more imposing than her ostensible subject.

Some argue the pictures Kawase presents to the world are mannered and self-consciously exotic – more Japonesque than Japanese. But they can be beautiful and represent a soft-spoken alternative voice in a national industry that has too often traded on bombast and eccentricity. And, crucially, it is this international profile that has laid the groundwork for many young independent filmmakers, especially female ones, to follow. 📌



Keeping it in the family: Katatsumori (1994) is a portrait of the aunt who brought Kawase up

PROLETARIAN DISCO



Macho man: Jerzy Radziwilowicz as Birkut, a latter-day Stakhanov figure in *Man of Marble's* pastiche propaganda material

Andrzej Wajda's *Man of Marble* is a wry take on Stalinist propaganda set in late-Soviet Warsaw. So what's disco doing on its soundtrack?

By Daniel Barrow

Andrzej Wajda's *Man of Marble* (1976) opens with a song. Brawny, jolly voices set against the din of a marching band: "The song is on your lips again." The newsreel footage we see – of a young man in a dirty vest laying bricks, then in a suit shaking the hand of a dignitary – is silent. This figure is Birkut, a bricklayer turned latter-day Stakhanov model worker, and an honest supporter of the drive for a communist society in Poland. Trapped in the amber of historical recall, his lips bear no songs.

The film is split between three time periods: the present of late 1970s Poland, in which Agnieszka (Krystyna Janda) is working on a documentary about Birkut as a final project for film school; the early 1950s, before the 'Gomulka thaw', following a wave of workers' revolts in 1956, that helped dissolve the repressive effects of Stalinism in Poland; and that period as recalled in the present day by official propaganda materials. (The footage, with its obsequious commentaries, was almost all fabricated by Wajda.) Wajda subtly marks out the time periods in the dialogue and sound design. Flashback passages have no non-diegetic music and character dialogue is sharply delineated, as if to emphasise the artificiality of these scenes from the theatre of memory. Contemporary scenes include overlapping speech but, most pertinently, Andrzej Korzynski's astounding score, which has recently been reissued by Finders Keepers Records along with part of the

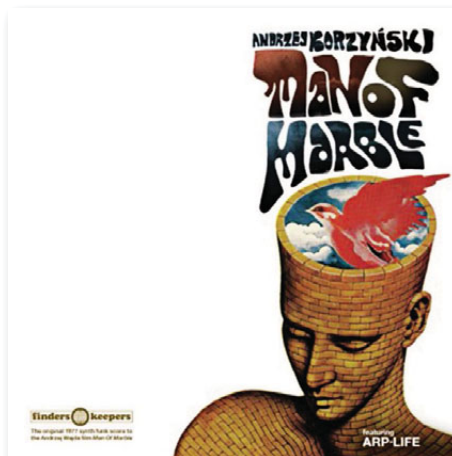
soundtrack to Wajda's sequel, *Man of Iron* (1981).

The first burst of nodding congas and distortion-drowned guitars, as Agnieszka gives a *bras d'honneur* to her TV producer (Boguslaw Sobczuk) and the credits flash up, is as sharp and louche as the intro of a Blaxploitation picture. Farting bass synthesiser is punctuated by cowbells and breathy vocals that waver between cheesy and abstract; wobbly, fuzzy keyboards scribble colour all over the remaining spaces of the track as the trio drive around Warsaw. Disco becomes here a music of soft layers, of flickering gestures: even the supposed tough foundations of groove, bass and percussion are hard to distinguish in their outlines from the fat neon colour of the synthesisers. The textural dissolution wreaked by electronic instruments was already prevalent in Afro-American popular music and jazz – Stevie Wonder's Clavinet and ARP, Sun Ra's Moog, the bank of keyboards

played by Parliament's Bernie Worrell – but disco in its 1976 form still relied on acoustic horns and relatively clean electric guitars and bass. The structure more closely resembles the arrangements of Marvin Gaye's *I Want You* (1976), in which the usual hierarchies of instrumentation are blurred by erotic delirium, and looks forward to the warm, dreamy loops that Arthur Russell teased out of disco.

What was music that even in the West was regarded as commercial, sleazy and frivolous doing in the (supposedly) grey context of late Soviet culture? Korzynski had worked regularly with Wajda since *Everything for Sale* (1968). He had come from the heart of the cultural establishment in post-Stalinist Warsaw, graduating from the Warsaw Conservatory and working for state radio – he served on the station's censorship board. Spurred on by exposure to Western psychedelia, funk and electronic music, he worked on pop records, soundtracks and library music, founding ARP-Life as a studio unit within state radio along the lines of the BBC's Radiophonic Workshop. *Man of Marble* was the first soundtrack Korzynski had recorded with the group. (Korzynski and a number of his colleagues were later responsible for several novelty disco hits under the name Franek Kimono: their tribute to Bruce Lee was the A-Side to the Polish seven-inch release of New Order's *Blue Monday*.)

As Agata Pyzik points out in *Poor but Sexy*, the Polish 1970s were "an era of relative relaxation", and "massive international loans" boosted the country's prosperity. Pyzik emphasises the subterranean links in this period with a cosmopolitan spectrum of experimental culture across the Eastern bloc and the interzones of West Berlin and Paris. It's from this perspective that the film looks back on the corruption and



Stayin' alive: the soundtrack to the 1976 feature

repression of the Stalinist 1950s, and finds an elective affinity with it. As Pyzik notes, Wajda plays with the aesthetics of socialist realism, both in the archive sections and flashbacks, in a way that cannot leave alone the ideals that animated it – nobility, monumentality, Promethean struggle in service of real human needs – that are indivisible from its falsity. Agnieszka's focus on Birkut, singer of sentimental prolefeed, fixes on what is true and living in that historical material. Just as she struggles to complete the portrait of Birkut – his deeds, his personality, the mental atmosphere of his life – from fragments of documentation and memory, so the music in a sense completes the period itself. Sitting in the van after her interview with Birkut's first wife, the soundtrack fades from a Stalinist song to the main theme, its spaced-out sex rhythms scoring tracking shots of 1950s housing blocks. During Agnieszka's reluctant visit to the new ironworks, lush strings and coruscating guitars, trailed by the kind of jaunty synths that would

Farting bass synthesiser, breathy vocals and fuzzy keyboards play as three characters drive around the Polish capital

decorate so many novelty disco records within a year, soundtrack shots of earthmovers and industrial architecture. Korzynski and Wajda elide the libidinalised technophilia of disco and the dream of the post-Stalinist period described by Francis Spufford in *Red Plenty*, in which full employment, mass housing, infrastructural development and space flight all seemed part of the same fabric of Soviet civilisation.

The failure of that reality and its ideals was clear enough in Korzynski's soundtrack for Andrzej Zulawski's *Possession*, released during the Gdansk shipyard strikes that precipitated the imposition of martial law in December 1981. For this portrait of a hell of frozen emotion and dripping viscera, shot in a West Berlin thick with Cold War intrigue, Korzynski pushed his synthesisers into regions of toxic dread equalled only by the soundtracks of Dario Argento's 1970s work. (*The Possession* score too was reissued by Finders Keepers in 2012.) He would go on to produce even stranger work in the 1980s, much of it still unheard outside Poland: in an interview, Finders Keepers founder Andy Votel has described Korzynski's soundtracks for Polish children's TV, recorded with the same instruments that would form the foundations of acid house, as "truly abstract", music "from an alien world". Part of the cult appeal of Korzynski's work and *Man of Marble* derives from a climate in which so much of the post-Soviet cinema that finds its sluggish way to UK theatrical release comes in the same orchestral syrup signifying Profound Emotion. The premature Ostalgic – a German term for nostalgia for the communist period – of *Man of Marble* reproduces itself in the face of a reactionary cinema of diminished expectations. ☹

i *Man of Marble* is out now on Second Run DVD, and is reviewed on page 97

PRIMAL SCREEN THE WORLD OF SILENT CINEMA

Hollywood employed more women in its early years than at any time since. A new online project tells their stories



By Pamela Hutchinson

Imagine a golden age for female filmmakers. We're not living in it. The latest Celluloid Ceiling report from the Centre for the Study of Women in Film and Television at San Diego State University revealed that just 16 per cent of people working behind the scenes on Hollywood's top 250 highest-grossing films were female. That's the lowest figure in the history of the report, first produced in 1998.

If not now, when? According to an impressive web resource called Women Film Pioneers (<https://wfpp.cdrs.columbia.edu/>), we have to look back to the silent era for more attractive numbers. "More women worked at all levels inside and outside the Hollywood film industry in the first two decades than at any time since," runs an introductory essay on the site, which celebrates "the hundreds of women who worked behind-the-scenes in the silent film industry as directors, producers, editors, and more". And with nearly 200 separate profiles online, the Women Film Pioneers project offers an increasingly complete vision of a lost Hollywood: one where people held jobs with quaint titles such as scenario editors and title writers, and where a substantial number of those people were female.

The project, from Columbia University, was first planned as a series of books in 1993. Twenty years later, it finally emerged as a freely accessible online database, generously illustrated and eminently browsable. Essays and career profiles are written by a growing group of researchers from institutions around the world, but new contributors are actively sought. It's an openly feminist scheme, intending to recast the image of a "film pioneer" as not always a man in plus-fours with a megaphone. But history has exceeded the pioneer-hunters' expectations: they have discovered many more early female filmmakers than anticipated. It's a genuinely joyous project, hailing previously unsung talent along with more familiar names such as Lois Weber, Alice Guy Blaché and the McDonagh sisters.

Some names remain obscure while their work continues to be celebrated. Scrolling through the site, I became engrossed in the story of Katherine Hilliker, who parlayed an early career in journalism into a post in the story-reading room at Universal. Keen for a higher salary, she took on a role as a PA in the publicity department before turning her hand to writing titles, cutting films, overseeing production and many other specialisms. In 1924, *Moving Picture World* described her job as "adviser on editorial problems; trouble-shooter on censorship snags; responsible for final editing and titling of productions assigned". Along with her husband Harry

The database proves that 'film pioneer' need not mean a man in plus-fours with a megaphone



Typist turned director Dorothy Arzner (right)

H. Caldwell, she eventually moved to Fox: the couple were hired as production editors, with a very accommodating contract. And it's here that Hilliker's artistic flair was put to work on the title cards for F.W. Murnau's *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans*; she is said to have plotted the famous 'sinking' intertitle, "Couldn't she get drowned?"

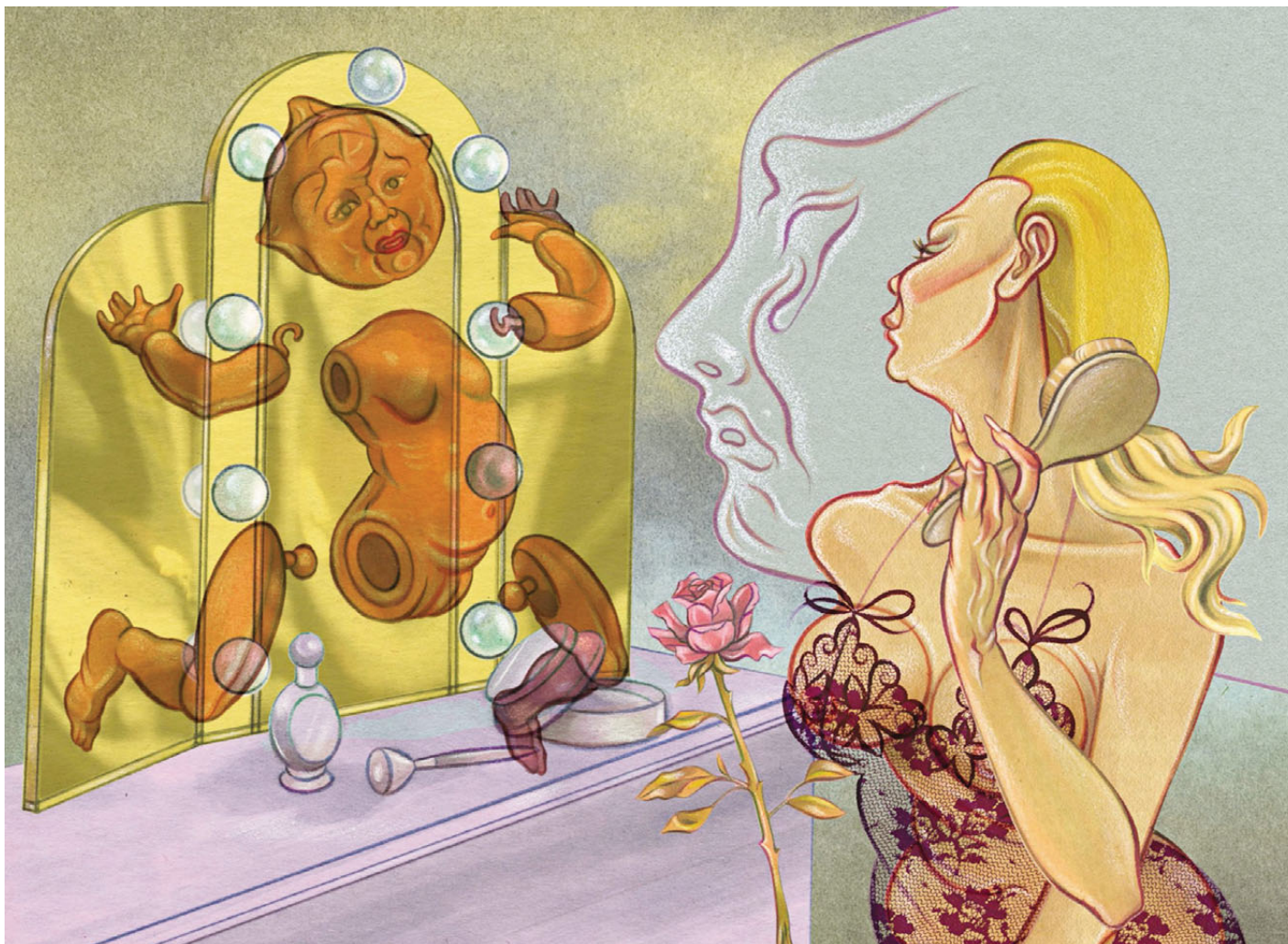
Each 'careerography' on the site subtly reformulates one's mental image of the film industry. The case studies collected there create a model of career mobility, which goes a long way to explaining why things used to be so much more equitable gender-wise. Many of the women profiled were actresses before moving behind the camera, but others began with less glamorous roles. Dorothy Arzner, for example, started out as a typist at Famous Players-Lasky before becoming a film editor, screenwriter and then successful director.

So why was silent Hollywood a more female-friendly place? Perhaps prejudices are learned rather than innate. In its early days, the film industry was held in lower esteem than the legitimate stage, which meant that a job in the pictures might not seem so far out of the grasp of working-class or middle-class women. Also, the plum roles in the studio weren't yet established as a male preserve, and the actors weren't necessarily in it for the fame. In studios where actors didn't expect to be billed by name but did expect to provide their own costumes and do their own make-up, there was inevitably a bit more fluidity between job descriptions. Florence Turner may have been the 'Vitagraph Girl' but she also did the company accounts – then capitalised on her business acumen by founding her own production company in the UK.

Not that gender-based assumptions were unheard of. A female camera operator certainly raised eyebrows, with *Photoplay* magazine archly reporting on actress Francelia Billington turning the crank in 1914: "I suppose that it is still a novelty to see a girl more interested in a mechanical problem than in make-up." The language might be updated but the reaction could be broadly the same a century later.

In 1927, as sound and the studio system were beginning to change the film industry for ever, an embittered Lois Weber warned other young women not to try to follow her into the director's chair. "Don't try it," she said. "You'll never get away with it." Perhaps we could do with a little more of the pioneer spirit today. ☹

OUT OF THE GHETTO



Here's looking at you: *The Thief of Mirrors* is Daniel Barrow's latest live-animation project, using a style that harks back to magic-lantern technology

At 60, the Oberhausen short film festival has much to celebrate – and shifting attitudes towards the mainstream bode well for its future

By John Beagles

Unsurprisingly, there was a certain bullish pride in some of the rhetoric at the opening of the 60th Oberhausen Film Festival. As the litany of speeches made clear, for a short film festival to survive for six decades in a business where the philistine marker of success is 'bums on seats' is an exceptional feat. As festival director Lars Henrik Gass remarked: "There is no market for short film – we have a blue carpet, not a red one." The fact that Oberhausen's long life has been marked by controversy, fierce independence and principled non-commerciality only adds to its reputation. To emphasise this, prior to the opening night celebrations the main screen filled with the names of the filmmakers and artists who historically got their first break at Oberhausen – an impressive, voluminous roll call of major artists and filmmakers. State funding has been instrumental in Oberhausen's success and the presence of several senior politicians at the opening night meant that many of the

speeches dutifully reminded the state of its obligation to continue supporting the festival's advocacy of experimental filmmakers. As a native of this sinking isle, I could only gaze on in admiration at this unqualified demand for the state to support culture, based purely on the value of culture in and of itself. I suspect the attendant politicians had that gnawing feeling that they had been ambushed.

As the festival programme made clear, however, the grass isn't entirely greener in Deutschland. The seminal Oberhausen manifesto of 1962 (written by, among others, Fassbinder and Herzog) that called for an end to "Grandads' cinema" also demanded that filmmakers were free from commercial constraints. Fifty years later, that 'fantasy' notion of unconditional funding of radical culture has, so we are led to believe, evaporated as the universal application of the business ontology spreads virally. Consequently, alongside the well-earned celebrations, the festival programme staged some of the tensions pertaining to the question of how to carry on under this new regime.

This topic was candidly tackled in one of the excellent Podium discussions, 'The Dream of the Big Screen', where speakers Martin Hagemann (producer), Elena Hill (Soda Film+ Art) and Berlin-based filmmaker Lior Shamriz asked,

"How can we make films in the future when the classical funding models are drying up?" Each participant's position on the sliding scale of film funding was distinct, Shamriz working on modest DIY budgets, Hill fighting to raise £1.9 million for an Omer Fast film and Hagemann struggling with bureaucratic and corporate interference as his budgets go over \$10 million. Their informative discussion ranged from criticisms of the defensive model of rationalising film's value in monetarist terms (Hagemann) to the virtues of an improvisational model of practice (Shamriz) and the adoption of a mixed-economy model for funding, where revenue is sourced from galleries, educational institutions, collectors and a canny use of equity funds (Hill). Faced with an increasingly monolithic and myopic managerial funding culture, all three asserted a robust advocacy of the cinema as a powerful democratic public art form, with Hagemann in particular discussing the need to find new audiences through distribution platforms such as video on demand. Perhaps most problematically, all three agreed there was an urgent political need to challenge and change the ideology of the funding councils and bodies from within.

Framing all three speakers' artistic, business and ethical positions was their proximity to that nebulous, shape-shifting entity, the

mainstream. The spectre of the mainstream, its gravitational power and defining influence, was a constant, hovering presence in Oberhausen this year. The paradoxes of continuing to assert a radical or avant-garde rejection and critique of the values and modes of engagement of mainstream entertainment were tellingly to the fore. This was most explicit in the festival's central thematic programme, 'Memories Can't Wait – Film Without Film', curated by Finnish artist Mika Taanila.

Taanila's catalogue essay espoused a "back to basics" approach (a phrase with worryingly conservative overtones to a British reader!), a cinema of reduction, restraint and absence, setting itself the task of reintroducing a more concentrated, reflective mode of viewing. For Taanila, this mode of engagement was set against the mainstream "cacophony of visual noise familiar from an era of mobile devices and somewhat neurotic online behaviour". Taanila's cinema of reduction and absence was most explicit in his choice of films that rejected the normative, mainstream conventions of illusionistic cinematic display and identificatory viewing. This was clearest in his showcasing of works that disrupted the flow of images on to the cinema screen, such as Walter Ruttmann's *Weekend* (1930) or Chris Petit and the Museum of Loneliness's premiering of *Lee Oswald's Last Dream* (2014). Counterintuitively, these anti-optical "films without film" utilised audio samples to create a mental visual landscape through the associative power of sound collage – in Petit's work the combination of archive radio and television material with contemporary music achieved the remarkable feat of reanimating that seemingly exhausted moment, John F. Kennedy's death. Historical works by William Raban (*Take Measure*, 1973) and Tony Hill (*Point Source*, 1973) had a similarly deconstructive approach to cinematic form. Hill created a DIY projector by shining light through a basket to create shifting psychedelic patterns on the cinema screen, while Raban measured the length of the cinema with a piece of unspooled celluloid. Alongside these 'films', Taanila programmed a performance and installation strain that further highlighted a quizzical attitude to the vocabulary and grammar of film, most notably in Valie Export's restaging of her 1967 *Abstract film no 2*, a work in which shimmering moving images are created by light from a 16mm projector being bounced off mirrored surfaces, onto which Export and another performer pour water and oil.

As a timely reminder of how artists have, as A.L. Rees remarks in his invaluable text *A History of Experimental Film and Video*, questioned the "assumption of cinema as cultural myth and industrial product", this was essential. However, as Rees's book outlines, such "questioning of vision, and of vision as truth" were born in a culture where 'avant gardism' as a term was still used and what later became understood as the suspect hierarchies between 'mainstream entertainment' and radical art were still adhered to. Taanila clearly had this in mind and featured alongside these largely historical works pieces by predominantly younger artists whose aesthetic DNA was decidedly more 'mongrel'.



William Raban's *Take Measure* (1973)

These 'films', specifically by Daniel Barrow and Pilvi Takala, were to my mind the most interesting works in the programme. Rather than embracing 'back to basics', artists like Barrow and Takala operate in between or beyond the traditional, institutionalised binary oppositions of the 'radical' and the 'mainstream'. For example, Takala's presentation *Bag Lady* (2006) achieved this by combining a familiar, popular TV-prank style intervention with the archetypal avant garde anti-film form, the silent slide-and-text projection. In the piece, Takala presented mundane, covertly taken slides and a descriptive narrative text detailing her innocent *flâneur* wanderings and social interactions in a Berlin shopping mall, armed with a transparent bag stuffed with money. As the image-and-text narrative evolved, the cumulative affect of the low-key observational revelations of how her fellow shoppers and the mall authorities responded to her subtle provocation had an anthropological incisiveness.

The gravitational power and defining influence of the mainstream was a constant, hovering presence this year



Tony Hill's *Point Source* (1973)

Their anxious responses to her 'innocent' parading of the cash were quietly devastating in bringing to the surface the neurosis and fear beneath the beige veneer of placid harmony.

Exhibiting in the theatrically impressive setting of the old decaying festival cinema, Daniel Barrow presented his highly original *The Thief of Mirrors* (2013) and *Looking for Love in the Hall of Mirrors* (2000). In these multimedia works, Barrow performed live 'animations' of his self-penned graphic-novel-style images by manually manipulating them on a school-assembly overhead projector, the simple technique producing mesmeric affects that were almost pre-cinematic in their nod to magic-lantern illuminations. However, as stimulating as the forms were, it was their combination with tangible social and political content that really set Barrow's work apart. Adding to the seductive nature of his animations was Barrow's own narration of a rich, amusing, highly poignant set of allegorical stories accompanied by a suitably elegiac pastiche baroque soundtrack. These archly told, at times almost magic-realist, tales recounting feelings of alienation prompted by sexuality- and class-related exclusion and longing had real bite. For example, the story in his latest work, *The Thief of Mirrors*, was, in the context of the 'Memories' strand, distinctive in its focus on a new aristocratic vein of class power, while *Looking for Love* was deeply affecting in its recounting of the hopes and desires of a repressed gay man lost in the 'big city'. It was this combination of formal originality, the best aspects of popular mainstream media (the use of narrative) and the aforementioned social content that resonated. Significantly, it felt as if Barrow was ethically ignoring the ghetto of historical (institutionalised?) avant-garde obscurantism and contemporary hipster obsessions with the marginal, opting instead to tell essentially mainstream tales in decidedly non-mainstream but memorable ways.

As the festival emphasised, it's a challenging time for independent film and video production. However, the example of these two artists was timely, firstly because they appear to reject the caricature of a uniformly dumbed-down mainstream that older avant-garde practices historically set themselves against (HBO anyone?), and secondly because they appear to understand that targeting the supposedly passive, uncritical viewing habits of a rather mythical mainstream audience is a dubious enterprise – didn't media studies contest this lumpen caricature long ago? I imagine that Barrow and Takala would also regard such a focus as politically misguided. Surely, as Martin Hagemann remarked in the podium discussion, a radical corpus of filmmakers, programmers and independent producers should be critically focusing on the values, habits and tastes of those who exercise the power in the mainstream – not the battered and exhausted consumers but the producers, those middle-class, university-educated 'philistines' who commission and propagate mainstream culture? Maybe such a shift of focus would prompt, as one of the characters in Barrow's work says, *pace* The Smiths, "good times for a change".



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Reviews



78 Joe

Affection for the overcooked, offhand violence of 1980s exploitation runs through David Gordon Green's films. More vivid, though, is the relish, shared with countrymen like Howard Hawks, Jonathan Demme and David O. Russell, for people, community and toil



60 Films of the month



66 Films



94 Home Cinema



104 Books



Field of dreams: Gary (Tahar Rahim) and Karole (Léa Seydoux) escape the cold, geometrical world of a nuclear power station for the warmth of nature

Grand Central

France/Austria 2013

Director: Rebecca Zlotowski

Certificate 15 94m 51s

Reviewed by Ginette Vincendeau

Like all films set around a nuclear power station, *Grand Central* contains an element of suspense, the soundtrack punctuated by plaintively sinister sirens. But Rebecca Zlotowski's accomplished second feature is no anti-nuclear energy tract, even as it points to its dangers; she is more interested in the melodrama that unfolds among seasonal workers at the station in a story that equates amorous passion and nuclear toxicity.

We are introduced to Gary Manda (Tahar Rahim) in a brilliantly edited scene on the train that takes him to the nuclear plant at Cruas in the Rhône valley, its massive towers looming in the background. Fare-dodging and a pickpocketing incident suggest a resourceful young man living on his wits. His job interview on arrival equally economically sketches both his social background (no qualifications, dead-end jobs) and the cynical exploitation by state-owned energy company EDF of people desperate enough to risk their health in order to earn a living. But Gary also finds camaraderie in the group of seasonal workers who live in a caravan camp by the river – a contrast with his own family, where, the film hints, relationships are fraught. The sense of the group of workers as a surrogate family is reinforced by its structure: two slightly older father figures dominate, Gilles (Olivier Gourmet), mentor to the group, and Toni (Denis Ménochet), who lends Gary money, while Gary himself fools around with friends his age, especially Tchernon (Johan Libéreau),

the young pickpocket he meets on the train. Predictably, this volatile male world is upset when Gary falls in love with Karole (Léa Seydoux), Toni's fiancée, a feeling quickly reciprocated.

Karole's spectacular entrance into the story concentrates the main idea of *Grand Central* – that love and nuclear radiation are equally intoxicating (in both senses of the term) – while it underlines the script's weakness. As the group is drinking around a table in the local bar, Karole, in micro-shorts and clinging vest, suddenly gets up and heads for Gary. She kisses him lengthily on the mouth and delivers a mini-lecture on the heady and dangerous effects of her kiss being similar to those of *la dose*, the critical level of radiation that the workers must not reach. She then proceeds to sit on Toni's knee. Her speech charts the programme of the film.

The twin perils of love and work provide the backbone of the story, as the mounting tension created by Gary and Karole's increasingly overt liaison somewhat obviously parallels the rise in Gary's *dose* as he performs more and more dangerous tasks – their final reunion takes place against sirens sounding seven times, signifying maximum danger. To drive the point home, there is also a scene in which the only other woman in the group, Géraldine (Camille Lellouche), sings a 1950 ballad entitled 'Maladie d'amour', whose lyrics proclaim "love is death but love is also life". But while Karole's kiss makes for a pleasing spectacle – the film's young stars undoubtedly make a sexy couple – as a character she lacks coherence. After her brazen behaviour in the bar, she is portrayed as sexually driven but submissive, frequently silent and strangely passive. In *Grand Central*, the world of work is male, the women signify sex and emotion (in this respect Zlotowski's film confirms that a woman director

provides no guarantee of a change in gender representations). Karole and Géraldine also work at the station, looking after clothing, but they are only glimpsed there and we learn nothing of their work, unlike that of the men. One poignant scene shows Géraldine in tears as her hair is shaved because of radiation after an alert; intentionally or not, the scene uneasily recalls the *femmes tondues* who were punished for sexual misconduct during the German occupation. By contrast, the alert for the men results simply in a more vigorous shower. Needless to say, Léa Seydoux's naked body is more explicitly on display than Tahar Rahim's.

Grand Central does not purport to be a documentary on a nuclear power station, but it does poetically evoke its menacing presence. The massive smoking towers on the bank of the Rhône, the hi-tech, cool, blue-grey interiors (shot in an Austrian station that never actually operated) have a brutal, dehumanised beauty that contrasts with the lush countryside of river, tall grass and leaves moving in the wind. Gary's first day at work compounds the effect by aligning our point of view with his perception as we hear his difficult breathing inside the heavy protective gear. The film also points out the lowly and precarious status of this group of workers who do the most dangerous work, as

Zlotowski's feature is no anti-nuclear energy tract – she is more interested in the melodrama that unfolds in a story that equates amorous passion and nuclear toxicity



A man apart: unskilled drifter Gary finds companionship with a group of fellow workers, but struggles to integrate harmoniously with his new peers

opposed to the better paid and better regarded EDF engineers – but only *en passant*. Similarly, health hazards (such as infertility) are evoked but with a light touch. Gary, Gilles, Toni et al lead hard lives but the film focuses on their passions and desires rather than political awareness. The point is in fact their marginal status, powerfully visualised by their caravan camp, a marginality that among other things can be traced to Zlotowski's cinephilia, as befits a graduate of the FEMIS, the French state film school.

Grand Central fairly explicitly blends references to French and American cinema. The latter, beyond the film's title, is most obviously figured in a mechanical rodeo bull in the roadside café, and the director has described her film as a western, beginning with a stranger riding into town. More pervasive are references to French cinema. It is easy to link Gary Manda's name to Jacques Becker's 1950 *Casque d'or*, in which a young worker called Manda (Serge Reggiani) 'steals' a beautiful, sensual woman (Simone Signoret) from the boss of a gang of thieves. Equally obvious, among other things, are tributes to Jean Renoir, a director also known for his love of marginal characters. The name Toni evokes his eponymous 1934 melodrama set among workers in the south of France, but perhaps more omnipresent are echoes of *Picnic on the Grass* (1959), also shot in the *midi*, in which sterile male science is pitted against a fusion of nature and a woman's curvaceous body. Similarly, *Grand Central* features a running contrast between the cold, geometric and death-driven world of the power station and warm nature associated with a woman's body, as Gary and Karole are virtually always seen making love in the fields.

Still, *Grand Central* is a film of today, not least through its uniformly excellent cast and

especially its two glamorous stars. Since he emerged in Jacques Audiard's 2009 *A Prophet*, Rahim has continued his spectacular rise in a number of lead roles that do not necessarily trade on his North African origins (here only a mere suggestion). His trademark mixture of naturalness, intensity and raffish charm is electrifying and endows his character with tremendous authenticity. It is more difficult to say the same of Seydoux. While she has also appeared in some well-regarded parts, notably in Abdellatif Kechiche's 2013 *Blue Is the Warmest*

Colour and Zlotowski's own *Belle Épine* (2010), her celebrity rests more squarely on her illustrious parentage, glamorous clothes and sexy looks, displayed in a stupefying number of magazine covers over the last two years or so, including, naked, for girlie magazine *Lui*. This dichotomy between the two stars logically finds its way into the film: while Rahim realistically finds his place within a group of male workers, Seydoux lacks credibility in this milieu and remains an attractive but distant fantasy creature, both for the men in the film and for the spectator.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Frédéric Jouve
Written by
Gaëlle Macé
Rebecca Zlotowski
Based on an original
idea by Gaëlle Macé
**Director of
Photography**
George Lechartois
Editor
Julien Lacheray
Art Director
Antoine Platteau
Original Music
Rob
Sound
Cedric Deloche
Gwenolé Le Borgne
Alexis Place
Marc Doisne
Costumes
Chattoune
Sylvie Ong

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Cinéma, France
3 Cinéma
**Production
Companies**
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France 3 Cinéma,
Rhône-Alpes Cinéma,
KGP Kranzlbinder
Gabriele Production
With the participation
of France Télévisions,
Canal+, Cine+, Centre
National du Cinéma
et de l'Image Animée
In association with
Ad Vitam, Elle Driver,
Soficinéma 9
With the support
of Région Rhône-
Alpes, Région
Provence-Alpes-
Côte d'Azur, Land
Niederösterreich,
Procrep,
Angoa-Agicoo

CAST

Tahar Rahim
Gary Manda
Léa Seydoux
Karole
Olivier Gourmet
Gilles
Denis Ménochet
Toni
Johan Libéreau

Tchernò
Nozha Khouadra
Maria
Nahuel Perez
Biscayart
Isaac
Camille Lellouche
Géraldine
Guillaume Verdier
Bertrand
Marie Berto
Moralì

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Studiocanal Limited

France, the Rhône valley, the present. Gary Manda, a young unskilled worker drifting from job to job, finds well-paid employment in a nuclear power station in the Rhône valley, where his willingness to take on dangerous maintenance work compensates for his lack of qualifications. He joins a group of other seasonal workers headed by Gilles, who becomes his mentor and in whose caravan he finds lodging. Gary is good at his increasingly perilous tasks and quickly becomes one of the group, whose members eat and drink together alfresco or in the local roadside café. A brief visit home reveals he has left a girlfriend behind and is no longer welcome.

Tension with his new colleagues arises when Gary falls in love with Karole, the fiancée of Toni, one of the more senior members of the group from whom he has borrowed money. Gary and Karole meet in secret to make love, often in the fields, but Toni becomes suspicious. Meanwhile Gary takes more risks at work, on one occasion saving Toni's life. To avoid dismissal, he finds a way of fiddling the monitoring equipment so as to conceal his mounting radiation levels. Karole discovers she is pregnant, and as Toni is infertile, the child has to be Gary's. She decides nevertheless to marry Toni. On the wedding night, Toni and Gary have a major fight. Gary loses his job when the true radiation level is discovered but Karole waits for him at the end.

Jealousy

Director: Philippe Garrel
Certificate 12A 76m 6s

Reviewed by Jason Anderson

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

Though Philippe Garrel may have waited nearly 40 years into his filmmaking career to name a movie *Jealousy* (*La Jalousie*), the title would've suited many of the 24 features that preceded it. Even when compared to the Nouvelle Vague directors who inspired him to start making shorts as a teenager in the 1960s, or later peers like Jean Eustache and Maurice Pialat—several of whose regular collaborators assist on *Jealousy*, including co-writer Arlette Langmann and DP Willy Kurant—Garrel has burrowed deeper into the darkest recesses of the heart than most others have dared. Over and over, he has devoted his energies to uncovering the past hurts, petty betrayals and seeds of distrust that corrupt and destroy once-great romances. There is no happily-ever-after in Garrel's love stories; the best you can hope for is a suicide attempt that doesn't succeed.

Serving as his father's leading man for the fifth time, Louis Garrel at least leaves this story in healthier shape than he did 2011's *A Burning Hot Summer*, which his character didn't survive. Indeed, as much as *Jealousy* reflects its maker's traditionally pessimistic view of romantic connections, it expresses a more hopeful take on the hardness of familial ones. That may be one reason *Jealousy* is more immediately appealing and less militantly morose than many of its predecessors. Its brevity (a briskly paced 77 minutes) and typically sumptuous black-and-white cinematography also make this a strong entry point for a body of work that has only recently become better known outside of France, Garrel's cachet having risen considerably with the international release of *Regular Lovers* (2005)—another vehicle for Louis, based on his father's experiences during the tumults of Paris in 1968—and new interest in his early efforts in the Zanzibar group and subsequent collaborations with Nico, his muse throughout the 1970s.

Like *I Can No Longer Hear the Guitar* (1991)—his Venice Silver Lion winner about the slow, sad disintegration of the relationship of another of Garrel's gloomy alter egos and a very Nico-like singer—*Jealousy* is keenly autobiographical, inspired by the affair that broke up Garrel's parents when he was a boy. Amateur psychoanalysts may delight in deciphering the director's decision to cast his son Louis to play a philandering character based on his father, Maurice. (Before his death in 2011, Maurice appeared in numerous films by Philippe, including *A Burning Hot Summer*.) Louis's sister Esther—whose other recent screen credits include Bertrand Bonello's *House of Tolerance* (2011)—also appears as his character's sister. Nor is this even the first time that their father has fictionalised these events: they're also the basis for one of his earliest shorts, *Droit de visite* (1965).

This intermingling of life and art is par for the course for Garrel, which adds a certain significance to his decision to switch the gender of the character, Charlotte, who stands in for his younger self. For one thing, the move expands the theme of jealousy to include the complex dynamic that can exist between a daughter and the old and new rivals that may also be



Family affair: Louis Garrel and Anna Moulalis in a film inspired by director Philippe Garrel's childhood

competing for her father's attention. Moreover, the decision points to a defining characteristic of the four features Garrel has made over the last decade, which is the increased prominence of female characters who are more dynamic and more strongly defined than the tormented and often callow cads played by the director's son. In *A Burning Hot Summer*, those women were the love-starved Italian movie star played by Monica Bellucci (rarely better) and the more fragile French counterpart played by Céline Sallette. Both were far more compelling than Louis Garrel and Jérôme Robart as their respective lovers in that romantic diptych. The actress played by Laura Smet was also the one figure of interest in *Frontier of the Dawn* (2005), Garrel's intermittently alluring but dramatically inert follow-up to *Regular Lovers*.

Here the emphasis falls on Olga Milshtein as the inquisitive and emotionally resilient Charlotte and Anna Moulalis as Claudia, her father's new girlfriend. Though a graduate of the CNSAD, France's premier acting academy,

Over and over, Philippe Garrel has devoted his energies to uncovering the hurts, betrayals and distrust that corrupt and destroy once-great romances



Sins of the father: Louis Garrel, Olga Milshtein



Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Said Ben Said
Screenplay
 Philippe Garrel
 Caroline Deras
 Arlette Langmann
 Marc Cholodenko
Director of

Photography

Willy Kurant
Editor
 Yann Dedet
Production Designer
 Manu de Chauvigny
Original Music
 Jean-Louis Aubert

Sound

Guillaume Sciamma
Costume Designer
 Justine Pearce

Production Company

SBS Productions
 presents

CAST

Louis Garrel
 Louis
Anna Moulalis
 Claudia
Rebecca Convent
 Clothilde
Olga Milshtein

Charlotte

Esther Garrel
 Esther
Manon Kneusé
 Lucie

Dolby Digital
 In Black and White

[2.35:1]
 Subtitles

Distributor
 Studiocanal Limited

French theatrical title
 La Jalousie

Paris, the present. Peering out from behind her bedroom door one night, a young girl, Charlotte, witnesses her mother Clothilde beg her father Louis not to leave her, to no avail. Sometime later, Louis, a stage actor, is living in a small apartment with his new girlfriend Claudia, an actress who was once a rising star but has now been out of work for six years. Though their love is strong and Louis supports her career, tensions arise due to Claudia's growing frustration and depression and Louis's flirtatious ways with other women, including Lucie, a co-star in his current play. Louis also remains close to Charlotte, who continues to live with Clothilde. The girl bonds with Claudia during a park outing. In a later conversation with Charlotte

and Claudia, Louis reveals feelings that stem from his abandonment by his own father. Louis objects when Claudia expresses an interest in giving up acting and taking a job as an archivist for an architect. Louis and Claudia are unfaithful to each other, though in considerably different circumstances. After Claudia declares her desire to move into a larger apartment that she has evidently acquired from another lover, her relationship with Louis suffers another blow. After a brief reconciliation, she leaves Louis. Back in their apartment, he shoots himself in the chest. He survives, and describes his sense of loss over the affair to his sister Esther. Months later, a happier Louis runs in to Lucie while on the street with Charlotte.

Moulalis is better known as a face for Chanel than for her performances in a wide variety of films, including *Coco Chanel and Igor Stravinsky* (2009), in which she played the fashion icon opposite Mads Mikkelsen's brooding composer. Given the vitality she displayed in such early efforts as Philippe Grandrieux's *La Vie nouvelle* and Jean-Pierre Limousin's *Novo* (both 2002) and her nimble turn as Juliette Greco in Joann Sfar's *Gainsbourg: A Heroic Life* (2010), it's perplexing that she didn't end up a bigger star. In any case, Moulalis brings a very valuable note of fury to Claudia, an actress who's clearly aware of her physical allure yet still finds herself consigned to – as one person unkindly puts it – “the scrapheap” on account of her age and artistic idealism. Even more painful is Claudia's failure to find the solace she needs from Louis. “I just need you to love me,” she tells him, even though she knows that what he can offer will not be enough.

Charlotte recognises it too, prompting one of the movie's most wrenching exchanges. “You know who daddy loves most in the whole world,” she asks her dad's new girlfriend. “You,” says Claudia, expecting some of the cheekiness befitting precocious children. “No, it's his daddy.” The denial Louis offers his daughter is notably feeble. A brief encounter between Louis and a former lover of his father also points to the impact of his unresolved paternal issues on his relationships in the present – what hope do Charlotte's mother Clothilde, Claudia or Charlotte herself have in claiming Louis when they have to compete with a ghost? And whereas Claudia's infidelities are fuelled by feelings of despondence, Louis's seems more callow.

As a result, the character's suicide attempt can seem more a matter of the director relying on a (very) familiar tactic than a plausible action, even given the film's slightly heightened brand of not-quite-naturalism. Yet the incident is based on fact, Maurice Garrel having reportedly made such an attempt in similar circumstances. Louis is also another in the director's long series of actor characters who seem bent on living their lives as if they were stage dramas, a tendency that may cause them to overreact or misinterpret events, with disastrous results. At one point late in *Jealousy*, an elderly mentor cautions Louis that “maybe you understand fictional characters better than the people close to you”. Talking with his co-stars as they change between scenes, the young thespian swears that he'd kill himself if Claudia ever left him, yet his threat inspires good-natured mockery rather than concern. “Our young Werther,” says one comrade with a laugh.

Louis might have been a more contemptible figure if not for the warmth and loyalty he displays in his relationships with his sister and daughter. And as in *A Burning Hot Summer*, the film's take on its actor characters is shaded by the question of what constitutes authentic emotion for people who fake their feelings for a living, as well as cinema's own limitations when it comes to representing it even when it's directly inspired by the most fraught material of Garrel's own history. Such matters add another layer of resonance to a film that is as thematically rich as it is deftly performed and presented. Kurant's precisely framed cinematography – which marks a return to wintry Parisian monochrome after the bold Roman colours of *A Burning Hot Summer* – is the perfect complement to a work that concisely encapsulates many of its director's best virtues and deepest concerns. 



The sorrow and the pity: Archie Alemania as Joaquin, and Angeli Bayani as Eliza in Lav Diaz's four-hour epic of crime and punishment

Norte, the End of History

Philippines 2013

Director: Lav Diaz

Reviewed by Adrian Martin

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

Lav Diaz is a polarising figure in the landscape of contemporary world cinema. The veritable 'elder' (now 55) of an experimental movement in Filipino cinema that includes Khavn De La Cruz, Sherad Anthony Sanchez and Raya Martin (all of whom refer back admiringly to the pioneering work of Lino Brocka), Diaz is for many a beacon of the 'slow cinema' trend that also includes Lisandro Alonso, Béla Tarr and Albert Serra. Working with extended running times (*Melancholia* from 2008 clocked in at an epic eight hours) and long takes, often static and in wide shot, Diaz tends to adopt the form of the social panorama or the family chronicle – a more homely, everyday version of the 'network narratives' favoured by mainstream cinema in recent years.

Yet Diaz's vision is harder and bleaker than anything in the network plots of Paul Thomas Anderson or Alejandro González Iñárritu. Often using non-professional actors in a blend of half-scripted, half-improvised situations,

Diaz draws a painstaking diagram of the social factors that shape the lives of the people he evokes and observes: class, money, religion, law, education. These external, determining factors often give Diaz's films a grim, relentless air of pessimism and inevitability – everybody seems to be trudging toward their particular corner of hell. But, as in any panorama with Balzacian ambitions, there are also unpredictable, personal factors that can complicate and even reverse the general slide toward doom: random, spontaneous acts of desire or violence, key moments of reflection or compassion.

Norte fits this template. The character of Fabian is a portrait of the rebel (and would-be artist) as futile philosopher or downright hypocrite, spouting fancy rhetoric (the film's opening line: "This is the end of politics") while remaining alienated from anything resembling practical activism. Like in a Leonard Cohen song, Fabian and his friends endlessly, nostalgically evoke the 'old revolutions' – which are of dubious relevance to their contemporary situation. Yet Fabian commits himself to a single, impulsive act of anarchistic murder, in sympathy with the oppressed Eliza. Like a tormented hero from the novels of Dostoevsky (whom Diaz greatly admires, and has often referenced), or from a film by Bresson, Fabian's life is sent into a tailspin by this one action. He thrusts money at Eliza in the

street or behind her vegetable stall; and he makes moves to ease or reverse the plight of her husband Joaquin, who is jailed for Fabian's crimes – but he never goes so far as to confess or give himself up. Instead (and this is a typical trajectory in Diaz's cinema), Fabian prefers to dissolve into anonymity, to become a 'nowhere man', last glimpsed in a distant shot, cruising on the water.

Joaquin's years in jail represent the other, contrary side of the 'Russian literature' coin – precisely the side that Bresson, for all the religiosity that some viewers project onto him, pointedly elided in a film such as *L'Argent* (1983). Joaquin becomes a kind of saint, quietly refusing to perpetuate the cycle of abuse and exploitation around him. He is the mythic figure of the sacrificial scapegoat – for Fabian and for his fellow prisoners – who suffers for the sins of others; in turn, some of these others (such as the sadistic Wakwak) come to their senses and break down in tears, seeking forgiveness and redemption. In a striking, Apichatpong Weerasethakul-like moment near the film's conclusion, Fabian is even shown in a dream-vision of angelic levitation. But it would be wrong to impute a strictly religious viewpoint to Diaz; *Norte*'s very title alludes to those church cults, rife in the Philippines, that preach the coming end of the world (just as Fabian preaches a more secular 'end of history'),



The film marks an intriguing plateau, and perhaps turning point, in the career of a director championed by many critics as a paragon of 'slow cinema'



Money talks: (from left) Angeli Bayani as Eliza, Kristine Kintana as Tating, and Mae Paner as Magda

amounting to just another desperate dream of escape from pressing, real-world problems. Diaz is a humanist with a lucid, materialist view of how his society works – and it is this friction between humanist hope and materialist pessimism that drives and structures his work.

It must be said that Diaz's dramatic imagination serves his female characters far less well than the troubled or abused males with whom (in one aspect or another) he clearly identifies. Eliza, in her daily struggle for economic survival, is given little to do other than walk around looking sad for long stretches of screen time. The exception is one unforgettable scene, the best and most intense in the entire film, when it seems for a moment that Eliza is, in utter despair, about to kill her kids – a gesture signalled merely, in a long shot, by her stepping behind them atop a cliff, and then returning to her initial spot. This is a rare instance of 'electricity' in Diaz's cinema, when his way of showing an event fuses perfectly with the dramatic content and his intent as a cruel moralist of our time.

Alas, this cannot be said of much else in *Norte*. Diaz is championed – sometimes excessively, without discrimination between his major and minor works or assessment of his strengths and weaknesses – by many critics who carry the torch for challenging, progressive cinema. *Norte* marks an intriguing plateau, and perhaps a turning point, in his career. After 12 years of relatively prolific, independent, low-budget production, it was the first Diaz film to be programmed at Cannes, in 2013. As a film in colour (as distinct from his frequent use of black and white), and with a restrained (for him) running time of four hours, it was even greeted by some acolytes as a sell-out to commercial (or at least wider) accessibility.

Such hardcore fans need not be too worried; Diaz is hardly set to challenge the fame of Spielberg, or even Haneke. In fact, while *Norte* does loosen up Diaz's style in a number of ways – consistent (if not conventionally dramatic) use of slow, gliding camera movements; almost surreal deployment of aerial landscape footage marking different stages of the narrative – it also conforms to his standard method. This method approaches a 'degree zero' of artlessness: conversations in long shot go around and around, scenes drain away, performances are hit-or-miss, the atmospheric sound is thin and unexpressive (Diaz abhors soundtrack music) and many situations (such as

characters sitting in cafes or ambling down roads) are repeated over and over without significant variation or development. Diaz fashions a panoramic vision of multiple, interconnected lives, but his ability to signal the passing of time lacks both traditional narrative craft and a more daring, rigorous way with ellipses, in the manner of Maurice Pialat or Pedro Costa.

In some of Diaz's earlier films (such as *Evolution of a Filipino Family*, 2004), this very Warholian air of emptiness and artlessness seemed to justify itself well enough: the space between the daily reality that he was staging and the means he was using to record it appeared so thin as to be almost non-existent. There was a certain thrill to this – the kind that persuades you to endure eight-hour screenings, in search of a new kind of filmic epiphany. But as the years pass and the Diaz 'formula' hardens, it becomes more difficult to excuse the lack of inventiveness and craft in his work in the name of some spurious 'neo-neorealism'. Diaz's most vocal fans do him no favours in this regard: he might become a better, more self-critical director if people stopped reassuring him that every new film he makes is a deathless masterpiece. 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Moira (Raymond Lee)	Executive Producer Wacky O	Perry Dizon Prof. Perry Sheenly Gener
Written by Rody Vera	Cast Sid Lucero Fabian	Gina
Story Rody Vera	Angeli Bayani Eliza	Lex Marcos Kiko
Michiko Yamamoto	Archie Alemania Joaquin	Julia Domingo Criselle
Raymond Lee	Angelina Kanapi Hoda	In Colour [2.35:1]
Based on a story idea by Wacky O	Mae Paner Magda	Subtitles
Cinematography Larry Manda	Soliman Cruz Wakwak	Distributor New Wave Films
Production Design Perry Dizon	Hazel Orencio Ading	Philippine theatrical title
Live Sound Recording Mark Locsin	Ian Lomongo Cesar	Norte, Hangganan ng Kasaysayan
Production Companies Wacky O Productions	Kristian Chua Peryong	
A film by Lav Diaz	Noel Sto. Domingo Salvador, killer for hire	
A Wacky O production		

The province of Luzon in the northern Philippines. The narrative interweaves three threads, each focused on a particular character. Fabian has dropped out of law studies, spending his days philosophising with his friends about the absence of values in Filipino society and the need for anarchism. Joaquin, recovering from a leg injury, lives in difficult financial conditions with his wife Eliza, their two young children, and Eliza's younger sister. Eliza is forced to sell their possessions to a local money lender, Magda. Fabian begins an affair with Gina, partner of his friend Kiko. Fabian also borrows money from Magda. He recklessly exposes his affair with Gina, causing expulsion from the circle. Joaquin begs Magda for a better deal and is turned down; he begins to strangle her. Fleeing the police, Joaquin hides out. Fabian visits Magda, killing her and her teenage daughter, Criselle. Joaquin is arrested and imprisoned for these murders. Eliza, misunderstanding the legal process, fails to appeal the conviction. Fabian is persuaded to make peace with Kiko, but drifts away from his friends. Eliza sells vegetables each day to support her family. Joaquin suffers violent abuse at the hands of fellow prisoner Wakwak, whom he later nurses. Fabian befriends but then rejects members of a religious group; he also encourages his legal friends to reopen Magda's murder case. Fabian visits his well-off sister, Hoda, on her farm. He explodes in rage, raping and abandoning her. As Fabian wanders through the landscape, Eliza at last visits Joaquin in jail.

Arthur & Mike

USA/United Kingdom 2012
Director: Dante Ariola
Certificate 15 93m 23s

Reviewed by Violet Lucca

A testament to both the derangement of the state and the value of search-engine-optimised page titles, the 'Florida Man' meme has been a consistent source of entertainment since early 2013. (For the uninitiated: try Googling "Florida Man" and see what the most recent news stories are; one will likely involve a katana.) Certainly, the Florida-set *Arthur & Mike* has a premise befitting this legacy: a FedEx floor manager (Colin Firth) buys a dead man's passport, fakes his own death by drowning and teams up with a kleptomaniac (Emily Blunt) who almost overdoses on codeine-infused cough syrup.

Yet what Arthur does with his newfound identity and companion (who also carries a fake ID) alternates between painfully boring and tediously clichéd. Motoring around the crappier parts of Sarah Palin's "real America", dull Arthur and quirky Michaela ("Mike" for short) confess their past sins over hot dogs and fries but never come close to touching any semblance of emotional truth. When greeted by a motel employee nonchalantly watching hardcore at the front desk, Firth hisses in his BBC Four radio drama American accent, "Excuse me, sir. I do not choose to partake of pornography. This is an extremely inappropriate subject matter for a public area." This puritanical outburst may seem odd coming from a man who has led those closest to him to believe that he's dead, and becomes even more hypocritical given the ease with which he beds the totally unstable, much younger Mike.

In the hands of a more masterful storyteller, such contradictions could have made for an interesting character study but here, it's just sloppy. (Blunt's character is such a totally unbalanced manic pixie dreamgirl that she's barely there at all.) About halfway through, the film tries to push the idea of "trying on" identities a little further as the pair begin picking out interesting looking couples, sneaking into their homes, dressing up in their clothes and then having sex on their beds. Intended to be provocative, this remains one-dimensional, as there's more screen time given to the sex than the game of it, or interacting more deeply with



My fairway lady: Emily Blunt, Colin Firth

their surroundings. (It's also fundamentally unsurprising: we're already watching two actors pretending to be other people pretending to be other people; also, there has to be something to break up the flashbacks to Arthur's failed career as a professional golfer.) These scenes are also hindered by the severe lack of chemistry between Blunt and Firth, as well as the theatrical way in which they act out these fantasies.

Because Arthur is the one who takes these flirtations to heart, he's made out to be the victim when things fall apart – his dream gig as a golf pro at a country club falls through after the owner (sensibly) Googles him and discovers Arthur's not who he said he was. Arthur's decision to return to face the things he was running away from – his girlfriend (a totally wasted Anne Heche), his son – comes as a surprise, largely because neither he nor Mike evince any emotional arc (Arthur isn't really that much looser; Mike is still a crazy klepto). They just seem to tire of their role-playing, despite the fact all the crazy stuff they do while on the road never seems to have any consequences. If nothing else, *Arthur & Mike* is a testament to the difficulty of making a boring man worthy of watching. Ⓢ

Begin Again

USA 2013
Director: John Carney
Certificate 15 103m 58s

Reviewed by Anna Smith

Fame muddles the mind – and it can also muddle the creative process. So posits this breezy musical from the director of *Once*. Set on the fringes of New York's music industry, it sees Keira Knightley's English singer-songwriter Gretta bonding with crumpled, jobless producer Dan (an excellent Mark Ruffalo). Both are reeling from break-ups involving infidelity and fame: she's been cheated on by pop star boyfriend Dave (Maroon 5 singer Adam Levine), while Dan's music-writer wife left him for a musician. Dan has also been fired from the record company he founded. These two are no fans of the corporate machine – and neither, one assumes, is writer-director Carney.

Gretta's boyfriend Dave is marked by sudden fame. After his song is featured in a hit movie, he's given a recording contract and a Manhattan apartment to match his swelling ego. When he plays a new version of one of his songs to Gretta, she frowns: it's over-produced, as cluttered as his busy new life – and it's lost its soul. Dave's hit song has brought riches, but potentially cost him his relationship and integrity. Contrastingly, a song might just 'save' dejected alcoholic Dan. When he stumbles upon Gretta's solo performance in a bar, the song she performs brings him motivation, friendship, success and eventually sobriety. An imaginative scene depicts this precise moment: revisiting the gig from Dan's point of view, it shows the drumsticks and percussion springing into action behind her and her guitar, accompanying her vocals as if magically brought to life by the Sorcerer's Apprentice.

Unlike fame-hungry Dave, both Gretta and Dan crave a simple, stripped-down sound and a straightforward life to match. By independently recording a demo on the roofs and back streets of Manhattan, they make a statement against the money-driven music industry. It costs them little and fosters both creativity and thrills: they enrol passing children as backing singers and race off excitedly when the cops catch up with them.

It's a sweet, sincere set-up with enough



Going for a song: Keira Knightley

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Alisa Tager
Becky Johnston
Mac Cappuccino
Brian Oliver

Written by

Becky Johnston

Director of Photography

Eduard Grau

Editor

Olivier Bugge Coutte

Production Designer

Christopher Glass

Music by/Score

Produced by

Nick Urata

Sound Mixer

Jeffrey Bloomer

Costume Designer

Nancy Steiner

©Vertebra Newman

Film Company, LLC

Production Companies

Vertebra Films

present in association

with Focus Features

International

a Cross Creek

Pictures production

in association

with Monarch Bay

Productions

Executive Producers

Helen Cappuccino

Andrew Cappuccino

James Holt

Eric M. Greenfield

Lisa Bruce

Natalie G. Hill

Cast

Colin Firth

Wallace Avery,

'Arthur J. Newman'

Emily Blunt

Michaela

Fitzgerald, 'Mike'

Anne Heche

Mina Crawley

Lucas Hedges

Kevin Avery

M. Emmett Walsh

Zazek

Kristen Lehman

Mary Alice Wells

Steve Coulter

Owen Hadley

Devon Woods

Janie Wells

Sterling Beaumont

Grant Wells

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Arrow Film

Distributors Ltd

US, the present. Divorced father Wallace Avery buys a new identity as 'Arthur Newman' and fakes his own death. Shortly after checking into a motel, he finds a woman high on cough syrup by the pool and takes her to the hospital. There he discovers her criminal record, and that she's using her twin sister's ID, and insists on going by "Mike" (short for Michaela). After Mike recovers, the two drive cross-country, their final destination Arthur's dream job at an Indiana country club. Along the way, they trade stories of their painful pasts (Mike's twin is schizophrenic; Arthur is a failed pro golfer), and begin sneaking into different houses in order to dress up in the resident's clothes and have sex. Back in Florida, Wallace's son and girlfriend bond over the man they didn't really know. When Arthur finally reaches Indiana, his boss finds out he's not really who he says he is. Disillusioned, Arthur reveals his ambivalent feelings towards his son to Mike, and she runs away with Arthur's money. Instead of pressing charges, Arthur drops her off at the mental hospital where her sister lives and returns home to his son.

Blackwood

United Kingdom 2013
Director: Adam Wimpenny
Certificate 15 89m 52s

Reviewed by Roger Clarke

From the opening scene, this ghost story lays its cards on the table: an empty house with its dusty interior framed in a series of static shots, ominous music and the sound of a grandfather clock that suddenly springs into life without human hand – a ticking that is both a prophecy and a countdown. Ed Stoppard plays the academic and TV historian Ben, who is in the process of rebooting his career and relocating his family to a quite clearly haunted Lutyens-style mansion they can barely afford. It's a contrived situation that immediately rings genre alarm bells. Ben is fragile after a mental breakdown and an academic scandal that has nearly ruined him; he jumps at every shadow and every lurking presence, most notably an ex-soldier (Russell Tovey) who seeks solitude in the grounds of the house. Trained to uncover hidden stories and histories, Ben, in a state of burgeoning paranoia, begins to believe that there is a history to the house that all the locals know, but will not tell him.

This is a handsome-looking film, all muted autumnal and bonfire tones dripping out their colour till the wintry denouement. The use of 1980s Panavision anamorphic lenses gives the film a wonderfully crisp feel, though their accuracy puts the production-design budget into unflatteringly sharp focus – supposedly ancient relics look like second-hand props from an out-of-town warehouse. Much of the film is predicated on middle-class status panic, with toe-curling infidelities and well-oiled dinner-parties, but it is reasonably well-structured, as it has to be: this turns out to be a time-slip melodrama rather than a simple ghost story; *Tom's Midnight Garden* meets *The Shining*. Most of the ghostly events witnessed in the first half of the film are premonitions, and there's a certain satisfaction in seeing the origin of those premonitions play out in the second half – amongst them a bloodied hand slamming a bedside table, a car-crash, failing house-lights and the sulphurous and malevolent figure seen in an upstairs window.

Ed Stoppard finally delivers an electrifying performance when he is actually electrocuted; condolences must be due to production designer Michael Howells for all the chewed scenery prior to that. To be fair, Stoppard – a theatre



The house that roared: Sophia Myles

actor by temperament – has a thankless role in the lead as the narcissistic TV historian turned deranged stalker. Tovey – who worked with writer J.S. Hill on his short film *Roar* – is rather better with his wounded, hang-dog mien, and Paul Kaye seems to relish his turn as a bearded, wood-whittling ex-forces vicar. None of the female roles adds up to anything. Greg Wise does a kind of Robert Downey Jr variation as the cocky academic who sharpens Ben's sense of jealous indignation. He's smart, smug, annoying – ripe for murder, in other words.

Director Adam Wimpenny heads up a successful TV, new-media and commercials company called Wildcard and this is his first feature. On the evidence of this he has a superb grasp of visuals but he doesn't show a deep understanding of the ghost-story genre, or how to get the best out of his actors. Its nearest genre relative is probably *The Others* but it fails in comparison on almost every single count. Anyone can film the leap from the grave. Not everyone can do the lying down that comes before it. Ⓢ

sharp character-based humour to balance out its sentimental streak. Gretta is played earnestly and capably by Knightley, though a more obviously musical actress would have made her story more convincing, as would catchier songs. But Gretta's musical success is a forgivable fantasy, especially given the film's realistic approach to relationships. Hinting at a potential romance between Dan and Gretta while simultaneously suggesting reunions with their exes, *Begin Again* keeps the audience guessing.

While clearly working with a bigger budget than his characters, Carney complements their vision by opting for street-level views of New York rather than sweeping cityscapes. While Dan drives a vintage car that reflects his bygone glory days, free-spirited Gretta travels on foot, on the subway and by bike. One of the film's most enjoyable scenes sees the pair walking around the city, sharing their favourite music using a headphone splitter. Money can't buy you happiness, suggests this likeable tale, but music just might – especially if you give the money men a wide berth. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Anthony Bregman Tobin Armbrust Judd Apatow	Production Companies Exclusive Media presents in association with Sycamore Pictures an Exclusive Media production A Likely Story production	Mark Ruffalo Dan Hailee Steinfeld Violet Adam Levine Dave James Corden Steve Yasini Bey Saul Cee Lo Green Troublegum Catherine Keener Miriam
Written by John Carney	Executive Producers Nigel Sinclair Guy East Marc Schipper Tom Rice Ben Nearn Sam Hoffman Molly Smith	In Colour [1.85:1]
Director of Photography Yaron Orbach	Music Gregg Alexander	Distributor El Films
Editor Andrew Marcus	Sound Mixer Tod A. Maitland	
Production Designer Chad Keith	Costume Designer Arjun Bhasin	
Cast Keira Knightley Gretta		

A New York bar, the present. British musician Steve ushers friend Gretta on stage to perform a self-penned song with the guitar. Dan watches appreciatively. Extended flashbacks show Dan – a heavy drinker – losing his position at the record company he founded, in front of his daughter Violet. Cut to the night he meets Gretta. Dan offers to help get Gretta a record contract; she refuses but they share a drink. Flashbacks show Gretta moving to New York with her newly famous musician boyfriend, Dave. Dave cheats on Gretta; Gretta goes to stay with Steve. Back to the morning after Gretta met Dan: she calls and agrees to play for his former record company but they require a demo. Dan helps Gretta record a demo on the streets of New York, with backing musicians provided by Dan's rapper friend Troublegum. Dan tells Gretta how his music-writer wife left him for a married artist, only for the latter to cut off contact and stay with his wife. Dan and Gretta share a night listening to their favourite music. Gretta meets Violet and persuades her to play guitar on a track; she accepts and bonds with her father. Dan tries giving up alcohol. Dave tries to reunite with Gretta – after consideration, she declines. Gretta has an offer from Dan's former record company and demands Dan is given his job back. She later decides to turn the offer down and Dan helps her sell the album online. Dan reunites with his wife and Gretta sells many albums with the help of Troublegum.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Adam Morane-Griffiths Written by J.S. Hill Director of Photography Dale McCready Editors Colin Sumsion Stephen Haren Production Designer Michael Howells Music Lorne Balfe Sound Recordist Giancarlo Dellapina Costume Designer Helen Woolfenden	Company A Wildcard Films production Executive Producers Ned Mackay Joe Hill	In Colour [2.35:1] Distributor Wildcard Films Distribution
CAST Ed Stoppard Ben Marshall Sophia Myles Rachel Marshall Russell Tovey Jack Otterley Paul Kaye Father Patrick Joanna Vanderham Jessica Isaac Andrews Harry Marshall Greg Wise Dominic		

England, present day. College professor Ben Marshall is relocating to the countryside with his wife Rachel and young son Harry. He has taken on a new job after suffering a mental breakdown, a crisis that resulted in a damaging academic scandal. They choose an isolated and rundown country house that they can barely afford; it is full of the eerie possessions of the previous owner. A series of spooky incidents, visions and encounters both with a local vicar and the ominous, lurking presence in the grounds of PTSD-afflicted veteran Jack convince an increasingly demented Ben that his son and wife are in grave danger, almost certainly from Jack. The situation is further exacerbated by the re-appearance of an old friend, Dominic, whose flirtations and irreverence seem to worsen his paranoia. Ben kills him. Rachel has to hide from her husband as he goes on the rampage with a bill-hook. She electrocutes him in the cellar. Rachel and Harry survive but Ben does not: he is the murderer predicted by all the portents.

Boyhood

USA 2014
Director: Richard Linklater
Certificate 15 165m 36s

See S&S
Interview on
page 20

Reviewed by Ashley Clark

A number of filmmakers have adopted unorthodox formal methods in order to tackle the philosophical and practical implications of the passing of time. For his famous and unique longitudinal documentary series *...Up*, Michael Apted has returned to his subjects every seven years since 1964 to monitor their progress in life. In the realm of fiction, the Filipino auteur Lav Diaz has serially attempted to impress the sheer weight of time's march upon viewers with muted, molasses-paced films that run up to 11 hours. On a more metafictional level, François Truffaut used four features and one short over 20 years to periodically check in on the progress of his character Antoine Doinel (Jean-Pierre Léaud), while Michael Winterbottom's *Everyday* (2012), which was shot over the course of five years, a few weeks at a time, charted the relationship between an imprisoned man and his family.

Everyday is probably the clearest precedent for *Boyhood* – Richard Linklater's 16th feature – but it was likely conceived after it. That's because *Boyhood*, which follows one youngster from first-grade to college, was shot in Texas in increments over the remarkable period of 12 years (2002–13), using the same core cast – Ellar Coltrane as the boy, Lorelei Linklater (the director's daughter) as his sister Samantha, Patricia Arquette as mother Olivia and Ethan Hawke as father Mason Sr. – every step of the way.

Linklater approaches potentially epic, elephantine material in characteristically unassuming fashion; from his debut *Slacker* (1991) up to *Before Midnight* (2013), the director has always been more interested in hanging out with his characters and observing their interactions with their environment than imposing artificial dramatic arcs. *Boyhood* proceeds in brisk, implacably linear chronological fashion, and despite its 165-minute running time, is astonishingly minimal. Save for one or two alcohol-related family blowouts and painful separations along the way, it is a quiet film of tender moments, micro-details and sudden, barely discernible editorial ellipses – sometimes the only way to initially ken that significant time has passed is to spot the lengthening or colour change of a character's hair, or the unheralded sprouting of a goatee on a teenage chin. It's the subtle accrual of details, argues Linklater, that defines a life, not the big moments. Instead of wedding ceremonies and clichéd depictions of awkward virginity loss, Linklater luxuriates in the minutiae: a cruelly enforced haircut here, a trip to the bowling alley there. He even begins the film in a quietly subversive way by starting *after* the recent separation of Mason and Samantha's parents. In a more orthodox film, this would surely be the launching point for the drama.

Young Mason starts off as an open-faced blank canvas, watching the world around him go by. In the early stages, his older sister Samantha is more of a presence, stealing scenes with hilarious, diva-ish antics. Yet over time, and no doubt reacting against the alpha-male pathology of his mother's heavy-drinking partners after Mason Sr., Mason transforms into an archetypal Linklater character:



The kid stays in the picture: Ellar Coltrane

the type of curious, selectively garrulous, gently nonconformist dreamer essayed by Wiley Wiggins in *Dazed and Confused* (1993) and *Waking Life* (2001). Accordingly, the film becomes less a study of 'boyhood' as a universal concept, and more specific to Mason, coming of age in contemporary America. Part of its magic comes from the ever-present tension between the viewer's appreciation of the onscreen action and their knowledge of the audacious extra-textual aspect. There's no way, for example, that Linklater could have known for certain when casting Coltrane at the age of six that he would have turned out to be so perfect for the role, or even stuck around to finish the task. The film's completion, given all the variables that could have affected it, is remarkable; that it works so beautifully is miraculous.

Throughout, Linklater's trademark compassion for his characters and earnest tone is unflagging; only once, in a mini-subplot about the career development of an Hispanic family acquaintance, does this virtue cross into vaguely

cringeworthy territory. The film is threaded together by a string of well-chosen popular hits, while its aesthetic unity derives in part from it being entirely shot on 35mm film – a far more common practice back in 2002 than it is in this current digital age. As such, the film also operates as a quiet lament for a dying medium.

Boyhood's title isn't misleading – Mason's experience and subjective view is prioritised from the opening shot of him staring at the sky – but the film is also a powerful study of family interaction, featuring excellent performances from Hawke and especially Arquette as the separated parents. Arquette gets the film's most moving scene, when Mason is casually preparing to leave home for his first day at college. A tearful Olivia comes to the sudden realisation that her life has flown by unceremoniously; a series of moments. "I just... thought there would be more," she laments. As this poignant, unsentimental film demonstrates, sometimes there simply isn't more: life just happens. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Richard Linklater
Cathleen Sutherland
Producers
Jonathan Sebring
John Sloss
Written by
Richard Linklater
Directors of Photography
Shane Kelly
Lee Daniel
Edited by
Sandra Adair
Production Designer
Rodney Becker
Costume Designer
Kari Perkins
Sound Recordists
Ethan Andrus
Ben Lowry
Ben Lazard

©Boyhood Inc., IFC

Productions I, L.L.C.
Production Companies
IFC Productions
presents a Detour
Filmproduction

CAST

Patricia Arquette
Olivia, 'Mom'
Ellar Coltrane
Mason
Lorelei Linklater
Samantha, 'Sam'
Ethan Hawke
Mason Sr, 'Dad'
Elijah Smith
Tommy
Steven Prince
Ted
Bonnie Cross
teacher
Sydney Orta

elementary school girl
Libby Villari
Grandma
Marco Perella
Professor Bill
Welbrock
Jamie Howard
Mindy
Andrew Villarreal
Randy
Brad Hawkins
Jim

In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Universal Pictures
International
UK & Eire

The film takes place over a period of 12 years, beginning in Texas, 2002. Six-year-old Mason and his sister Samantha live with their mother Olivia, seeing their estranged father Mason Sr. only intermittently. Olivia, Mason and Samantha move into a new house. Later, Olivia marries Bill, a professor at the college she attends. Bill turns out to be an abusive alcoholic, who terrorises Olivia, Mason, Sam and his own two children. Olivia and Bill separate, and Mason is transferred to a new school. Olivia qualifies as a teacher and moves in with a new partner, corrections officer Jim. Mason develops an interest in photography. Mason, Samantha, Mason Sr. and Mason Sr.'s new wife, visit Mason's paternal grandparents for his 16th birthday. Jim, too, is seen to have an alcohol problem and he and Olivia split. Mason gets his first girlfriend and lands a part-time job as a dishwasher. Mason and his girlfriend split acrimoniously before he graduates from high school. Mason experiences his first day at college, where he strikes up immediate friendships with three new peers.

Bright Days Ahead

France 2013
Director: Marion Vernoux
Certificate 15 94m 12s

Reviewed by Perle Petit

Starring an unrecognisable Fanny Ardant, *Bright Days Ahead* is a light-hearted drama that comments on the frustrations of the so-called 'golden years' of retirement. Like in her previous films, *Love, etc.* and *Empty Days*, director Marion Vernoux sets her unconventional romance against the beaches of Dunkirk. Based on a novel by Fanny Chesnel, the result is a simple, stylish yet ultimately lacklustre effort.

Truffaut regular Ardant becomes Caroline, a newly retired dentist who is bought a trial membership to a seniors club by her daughters. Upon her reluctant arrival, she meets a team of condescending employees, a menagerie of lively pensioners and attractive IT instructor Julien. Though he is roughly the same age as her daughters, they immediately begin a passionate and not particularly private, affair. Inevitably, Caroline's husband, Philippe (Patrick Chesnais), becomes aware of her infidelity and Caroline must choose between her new, considerably more exciting life and the complacent happiness she is accustomed to.

As Caroline, Ardant is capricious, at times reserved and hesitant, at others child-like and impulsive. Her generally haughty demeanour is offset by her tentative, stuttering need for Julien's post-coital approval. "Why me?" she asks; "Do you want me to answer?" he replies. Laurent Lafitte plays Caroline's philandering lover and, though there are a few unconvincing efforts to develop his character, he is charming as an unfazeable ladies' man. The film avoids dwelling too much on the stigma of age difference for, although Caroline becomes the object of Julien's affection, she soon realises she is one of many women in his life. Relatively unconcerned by this, she drifts through the film taking opportunities as they come. Essentially, the affair begins on a whim, when Julien asks Caroline if she could take a look at his teeth. Her marriage is not unhappy; Philippe defends and supports her and, in return, Caroline does not attempt to hide the affair or to deny it.

All this would matter more if the film connected with us on an emotional level.



Young at heart: Laurent Lafitte, Fanny Ardant

Unfortunately, though it is well conceived and well cast, it feels contrived. This is most clear when the film makes disappointing attempts to justify Caroline and Julien's relationship. The original title, *Les Beaux Jours*, literally translates as 'the beautiful days'. Caroline's affair works because she does not think of it in terms of her past with Philippe or her potential future with Julien. So when there is an implication that there might be more than simple chance and spontaneity to the affair – by suggesting that Julien is a sex-addict or that Caroline is more important than his usual conquests by virtue of being the fulfilment of a lust he felt as a teenager attending her surgery – the film begins to lose sight of its *laissez-faire* attitude. It's almost as if there is a loss of confidence in the morally indifferent tone that previously upheld the picture, and so a vague rationalisation is shoehorned in. In the same way, it is difficult not to notice the abundance of trite romantic clichés aiming to give credibility to Caroline's infidelity. Luckily, these are assuaged by the sordid details of the affair, such as when Caroline crosses paths with the women Julien has pencilled in before and after her. So though we find moments to enjoy, *Bright Days Ahead* seems at odds with itself, as if it is not quite sure what it wants to achieve. In the end, it fails to deliver a more lasting impression and what could have been an interesting film becomes simply an unoriginal but polished romance. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

François Kraus
Denis Pineau-Valencienne
Juliette Favreul
Renaud

Screenplay

Marion Vernoux
Fanny Chesnel
with the collaboration
of Marc Syrigas

Based on *Une jeune fille aux cheveux blancs* by Fanny Chesnel

Director of Photography

Nicolas Gaurin

Editor

Benoît Quinon

Production Designer

Yann Dury

Music

Quentin Sirjacq

Sound

Michel Casang

Costume Designer

Marité Coutard

©Les Films du

Kiosque, 2711

Production, Direct

Cinéma, Pictanova

Production

Companies

Produced by Les
Films du Kiosque,
27.11 Production
with the participation
of Canal+, OCS, D8

in association with

Hoche Images, La

Banque Postale

Image 6

with the support of

Pictanova and the

Région Nord-Pas-de-

Calais, Soficinéma

7 Développement,

Apidev 2, Uni Etoile 9

Développement, CNC,

Procirep, l'Angoa

Film Extracts

À l'Ouest, un souffle

nouveau (2009)

CAST

Fanny Ardant

Caroline

Laurent Lafitte

Julien

Patrick Chesnais

Philippe

Jean-François

Stévenin

Roger

Fanny Cottençon

Chantal

Catherine Lachens

Sylviane

Alain Cauchi

Jacky

Marie Rivière

Jocelyne

Marc Chapiteau

Hugues

Féodor Atkine

Paul

Olivia Cote

Lydia

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[166:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

Picturehouse

Entertainment

French theatrical title

Les Beaux Jours

French coast, present day. Newly retired dentist Caroline reluctantly attends a trial membership at a seniors club. There she meets IT instructor Julien and though he is 20 years her junior, they begin a passionate affair. Caroline soon realises that Julien is a serial womaniser but the relationship continues. When her husband, Philippe, finds out, she tries to end the affair but ends up booking a weekend to Iceland for

herself and Julien. Before leaving, she catches Philippe packing but doesn't stop him. Once at the airport, she sees Julien chatting to a pretty girl and tells him to go without her. She calls Philippe from a hotel and they hitchhike back to town together. Time passes; both Caroline and Philippe are at the beach with members of the seniors club, where they jump into the sea with the others, seemingly happy in life and with each other.

Earth to Echo

USA 2014
Director: Dave Green
Certificate PG 91m 7s

Reviewed by Anton Bitel

"Echo, that's what we should call it," says 13-year-old Alex (Teo Halm) of the little robotic alien that he and his friends Tuck (Brian 'Astro' Bradley) and Munch (Reese Hartwig) have just discovered out in the Nevada desert, and that offers bleepy electronic reproductions of the sounds around it. Tuck would prefer to call it "something cool, like Space Ninja" but Alex, to whom the creature seems most responsive, has the final say.

With their suburban homes about to be dug up supposedly to make way for a new freeway, these three boys are spending their last night together on an adventurous rite of passage, guided by strange signals that have appeared on their mobile phones. The boys' bicycle-borne efforts to locate, rebuild and get Echo home while escaping the clutches of some government agents (disguised as construction workers) clearly mirror their own opposition to the demolition of their town, and their desire to reintegrate a collapsing community. As a foster child and "drifter" who has been moved from one family to another, Alex identifies particularly closely with Echo, sharing its panicky sense of abandonment and alienation, as well as a desire for a lost home. So the robot does not just duplicate ambient noise, but also the psychologies of these young people about to fall over the edge of adolescence. Its story echoes theirs.

This is not the only resonance to be found in Dave Green's feature debut *Earth to Echo*, which is so overtly indebted to Steven Spielberg's 1982 film of kids on bikes, a home-seeking extra-terrestrial and shadowy G-Men that its very title might meaningfully be abbreviated to *E.T. Echo*. Along the way, much as Echo is reconstituted from spare parts, Green's film takes bits from here and there to renew itself: TV's *Children of the Dogstar* (1984) and Joe Dante's *Explorers* (1985), which featured an alien device reassembled by children; Richard Donner's *The Goonies* (1985), which sent young friends adventuring when their home was under threat from redevelopment; and Matthew Robbins's *Batteries Not Included* (1987), which had alien bio-machines saving a building from demolition. *Earth to Echo* remixes all these Eighties motifs, ensuring that Alex and his friends' contemporary escapades come with a nostalgic echo for any parents viewing the film along with their children. **A**



Sounds familiar: Reese Hartwig, Teo Halm

Meanwhile, everything we see onscreen represents Tuck's year-later edit of Skype conversations, text messages, web searches and the copious footage he shot at the time on various cameras. This brings a postmodern, mediated 'first-person' frame to the proceedings, as well as revealing the influence of more recent films like J.J. Abrams' *E.T.*-aping *Super 8* (2011) and Josh Trank's *Chronicle* (2012), both of which featured young friends, 'found footage' and alien spacecraft buried underground.

If all this sounds like a boys' own adventure, the trio is also eventually joined by Emma (Ella Wahlestedt) who, refreshingly, outsmarts her male companions and even rescues Alex when his other friends singularly fail to do so. Touches like this – and a certain bittersweetness to the ending – allow an otherwise overtly derivative film to feel as though it is still bringing something new to its reassemblage of old cinematic scrap. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Andrew Panay
Ryan Kavanaugh
Screenplay
Henry Gayden
Story
Henry Gayden
Andrew Panay
Director of Photography
Maxime Alexandre
Edited by
Crispin Struthers
Carsten Kurpanek
Production Designer
Kasra Farahani
Music
Joseph Trapanese
Sound Mixer
Harrison D. Marsh
Costume Designer
Judiana Makovsky
Visual Effects
Shade
Base
Berno
FutureDeluxe VFX
Comen VFX
Prime Focus

©RML Echo
Films, LLC
Production Companies
Relativity Media

presents a Panay
Films production
Executive Producers
Tucker Tooley
Ron Burkle
Jason Colbeck
Mark B. Johnson
Robbie Brenner
Jack Kavanaugh
Dave Miller

CAST
Teo Halm
Alex
Brian 'Astro' Bradley
Tuck
Reese Hartwig
Munch
Ella Linnea Wahlestedt
Emma
Jason Gray-Stanford
Dr Lawrence Madsen
Alga Smith
Marcus Simms
Cassius Willis
Calvin Simms
Sonya Leslie
Theresa Simms
Kerry O'Malley
Janice Douglas
Virginia Louise

Smith
Betty Barrett
Peter Mackenzie
James Hastings
Valerie Wildman
Christina Hastings

Dolby Digital In Colour [L85:1]
Distributor
El Films

Nevada, a year ago. With the construction of a new freeway due to break up their community and their friendship, 13-year-olds Alex, Tuck and Munch receive strange signals on their mobile phones that map out a location in the desert. On their last night together, they bike there and find a small, half-buried metallic capsule which lights up and beeps in response to them. As their phones direct them to more locations – a barn, a pawnshop, an arcade games warehouse, a bar, a scrap metal yard – more bits and pieces attach themselves to the capsule and its strength increases, until a tiny, owl-like robotic alien emerges, which they dub Echo. A series of yes/no questions leads them to realise that Echo is trying to find its spaceship and get home, before the freeway 'construction workers' – in fact government agents – capture and destroy it. Joined by Emma, the boys escape the clutches of the G-men – who are convinced Echo is bent on destruction – and help Echo into its spaceship, buried beneath the town. Echo leaves, Alex and Munch move away, but the four children remain long-distance friends. Tuck edits together a secret video of their adventure.

Edge of Tomorrow

USA 2014

Director: Doug Liman

Certificate 12A 113m 18s

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

It's somehow fitting, given the resilience of Tom Cruise's career as an action-movie icon, through smash hit and clunker alike, that he should wind up playing a character whose repeated death proves no obstacle to his determination to save the planet. Some viewers may take cruel pleasure in seeing the ever-confident one meet his demise myriad times, as his American soldier perishes in a massed attack on the deadly aliens who control Europe in this near-future scenario, only to wake up at the start of the same day facing the precarious parachute drop and lethal extraterrestrial foes all over again. Since Cruise is playing a combat-shy army PR man demoted to private by Brendan Gleeson's commander, he's swiftly wiped out once more, but each time gains from the experience in a cyclical narrative which seemingly owes a major debt to *Groundhog Day* but is in fact an adaptation of Hiroshi Sakurazaka's 2004 Japanese novel *All You Need Is Kill*. Like Harold Ramis's classic comedy, once the audience have grasped the big idea, the film is free to play with ellipses, leapfrogging dozens if not hundreds of cycles at a stretch, and tease us with not quite knowing whether given moments are the first or umpteenth time Cruise has passed this particular way.

The resources of a large-scale CGI blockbuster notwithstanding, director Doug Liman is at his most deft in establishing a playful tone in the film's first half, Cruise showing an adept comic touch as the fast-talking coward who swiftly has to adjust to seriously altered realities, and Bill Paxton delivering the typical hard-ass drill-sergeant role with the mischievous air of a man in on the joke. Paxton's seemingly platitudinous mantra about men being formed in the "fiery crucible" of combat, however, turns out to be



Groundhog slay: Tom Cruise

the abiding theme of the movie, which becomes more formulaic as Cruise trains up, tools up, and dashes towards a conventional showdown in the aliens' nerve centre. Whether it's the imprint of British screenwriters Jez and John-Henry Butterworth, there's a WW2 resonance to the D-Day-style assault on a French beach and with it a guiding notion of finding inner heroism when the times call for it; yet the movie becomes less interesting the more Cruise plays to his over-familiar, determinedly manly type.

The contribution of Noah Taylor in the thankless role of the exposition-spouting biologist who's worked out why Cruise and kick-ass female warrior Emily Blunt have been thrown for a temporal loop-the-loop does leave one wondering whether his off-kilter presence might have proved a better fit in the central role but tentpole movies, sadly, don't really work that way. Instead they operate according to the relentless crowd-pleasing imperatives that allow *Edge of Tomorrow* to conjure up a groanworthy feelgood ending which blatantly ignores the logic of the one-day-at-a-time reset which has operated throughout the rest of the picture. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Erwin Stoff
Tom Lassally
Jeffrey Silver
Gregory Jacobs
Jason Hoffs
Written by
Christopher McQuarrie
Jez Butterworth
John-Henry Butterworth
Based on the novel entitled *All You Need Is Kill* by Hiroshi Sakurazaka
Director of Photography
Dion Beebe
Edited by
James Herbert
Laura Jennings
Production Designer
Oliver Scholl
Music
Christophe Beck
Production Sound Mixer
Stuart Wilson
Costume Designer
Kate Hawley
Visual Effects by
Sony Pictures Imageworks Inc.
Framestore
MPC UK & Vancouver
Cinesite
Rodeo FX
Nvizible
Stunt Co-ordinator
Wade Eastwood
@Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.,
WV Films IV LLC
and RatPac-Dune Entertainment LLC (U.S., Canada, Bahamas & Bermuda)
©Village Roadshow Films (BVI) Limited,
Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.
and RatPac-Dune Entertainment LLC (all other territories)
Production Companies
Warner Bros. Pictures presents

in association with
Village Roadshow Pictures and RatPac-Dune Entertainment
a 3 Arts Production in association with
Viz Productions, LLC
A Doug Liman film
With the participation of the Province of British Columbia
Production Services Tax Credit
Executive Producers
Doug Liman
David Bartis
Steven Mnuchin
Joby Harold
Hidemichi Fukuhara
Bruce Berman

CAST

Tom Cruise
Major William Cage, 'Bill'
Emily Blunt
Rita Vrataski
Bill Paxton
Master Sergeant Farell
Brendan Gleeson
General Brigham
Jonas Armstrong
Skinner
Tony Way
Kimmel
Kick Gurry
Griff
Franz Drameh
Ford
Dragomir Mrcic

Kuntz
Charlotte Riley
Nance
Noah Taylor
Dr Carter

Dolby Digital/ Datasat Color/Prints by Technicolor [2.35:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor
Warner Bros. Distributors (UK)

The near future. Deadly extraterrestrials known as Mimics have overrun mainland Europe. The United Defense Force is about to launch a major counter-attack from Britain and commanding officer General Brigham suggests that army public-relations expert Major Bill Cage report from the front line. When Cage refuses, Brigham has him demoted to private and he joins a squad of grunts. Lacking any equipment training or indeed courage, he's soon killed on the beach-head by a large Mimic, only to wake up and restart the same day. This occurs repeatedly, allowing Cage to use past knowledge to progress a little further each time, eventually realising that heroic UDF fighter Rita Vrataski has shared the time-looping experience. They

visit former biologist Dr Carter, who explains that the larger 'alpha' Mimics have the power to reset time, and operate as a network connected to an 'omega' nerve-centre. Cage has visions suggesting this is located in an alpine dam, so he and Vrataski go through myriad resets as he develops combat skills and they fight their way off the beach. Eventually, he reaches the dam, but it's a trap laid by the Mimics, so he resets and joins his old squad and Rita on a mission to destroy the real 'omega' location beneath the Louvre. The soldiers perish, Rita and Cage are mortally wounded, but they kill the 'omega' and disable the Mimic network. Cage awakens on the eve of the UDF assault to find General Brigham announcing a surprise victory and Rita still alive.

Finding Vivian Maier

USA 2013

Directors: John Maloof, Charlie Siskel

Reviewed by Graham Fuller

The non-professional street photography of Vivian Maier (1926-2009), who supported herself as a nanny and caretaker from 1951 until the early 90s, was one of the great art discoveries of the last decade. The self-taught Maier had a genius for capturing unrepeatable moments, her choices informed by an awareness of social inequities. Her photographs of white suburban kids make most sense when viewed along side those of inner-city black kids. Uninterested in glamour, she was a connoisseur of faces in which anxiety has settled, though she empowered their owners by shooting them from a low angle with a Rolleiflex. Her most powerful work intimately depicts the down-and-outs of Manhattan's Bowery and Chicago's South Side. Her Weegee-like fascination with crime scenes evolved into a broader vision of upheaval when she photographed the aftermath of the Chicago Riots.

Although Maier once sought to market her photos as postcards, she did not otherwise try to disseminate her work, which was never published or exhibited during her lifetime. Much of it was unseen in print form by Maier herself. According to John Maloof, who narrated and co-directed this documentary about his role in her discovery, he acquired from her estate 100,000 negatives, 2,000 undeveloped black and white rolls of film, 700 rolls of undeveloped colour film and 150 Super 8 and 16mm home movies.

They and Maier's prints (around 5,000) were the gold in the modest Xanadu that was offered for auction when her seven unpaid-for storage units were opened up in 2007. Maloof bought an estimated 90 per cent of her photos and was slowly selling prints made from the negatives on eBay when he was alerted to their importance. The Maier cottage industry thus began even before she died in poverty in 2009. Neither Jeffrey Goldstein nor Ron Slattery, the other major Maier collectors, appears in the film, though Goldstein and Maloof, the main beneficiaries of her legacy, have collaborated on research.

Finding Vivian Maier deploys camera tricks

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

John Maloof
Charlie Siskel

Story

John Maloof
Charlie Siskel

Director of Photography

John Maloof

Editor

Aaron Wickenden

Music

J. Ralph

Production Sound

Scott Palmer
Steve Lynch

©Ravine

Pictures, LLC

Executive Producer

Jeff Garlin

narrator

John Maloof

In Colour

[1.78:1]

Distributor

Soda Pictures

In a whimsical opening montage, the late American photographer Vivian Maier is remembered as a mysterious and intensely private eccentric by members of the families who hired her as a nanny. John Maloof, the onscreen narrator, describes buying a box of Maier's negatives for \$380 at an auction in 2007 and lays out his many purchases from her estate. Having Googled her in vain, he launched a blog of 200 of her images "that just went insane". He debuted Maier's work at the Chicago Cultural Center in 2011. Photographer Mary Ellen Mark brackets it with the work of Robert Frank, Diane Arbus, Helen Levitt, and Lisette Model. Maloof admits guilt about exposing her work.



Lens flair: Vivian Maier

and breezy music as it marvels at Maier's spiky personality, "Nazi" stride and compulsive hoarding. Her voice, which she recorded on tapes also bought by Maloof, is clear and confident. The interviews with Maier's former employers and their grown children gradually build a picture of a troubled, lonely woman.

The film is less trenchant, however, than Jill Nichols's *Vivian Maier: Who Took Nanny's Pictures?*, which aired on BBC's *Imagine* series last June. As the title suggests, it objects to the posthumous curating and presentation of Maier's work. "I'm concerned because we only see what the people who bought the suitcases [of photos] decided to edit, and what kind of editors are they?" photographer Joel Meyrowitz told the BBC. Goldstein describes his and Maloof's drug-deal-like purchase of a cache of photos at a meeting attended by two armed heavies. He adds that he's glad he didn't profit from them while Maier was alive.

The BBC film's most penetrating insights come from photography lecturer Pamela Bannos. Incensed by the dispersal of Maier's work, Bannos seeks to demystify through meticulous investigation the photographer's image as an unfathomable enigma – "Mary Poppins with a camera" – which is fostered by those less likely to cash in on the idea of a complexly gendered oeuvre that demands sociological and psychological analysis. In deducing that Maier was able to snap Salvador Dalí outside the Museum of Modern Art in early 1952 because she must have been visiting a major French exhibition there (Brassai, Doisneau, Cartier-Bresson, et al), Bannos insists she was studying her craft, undercutting the myth that she was a gifted oddball. *Finding Vivian Maier* consults Meyrowitz and Mary Ellen Mark as experts but shies away from serious aesthetic evaluation. Ⓜ

The Galapagos Affair Satan Came to Eden

USA 2013, Directors: Dayna Goldfine, Dan Geller

Reviewed by Graham Fuller

Viewers who watch *The Galapagos Affair* without prior knowledge may wonder what they are seeing. The story of 1930s colonials fighting a territorial war on the Pacific island of Floreana, hitherto occupied by lizards and birds, suggests a mockumentary – a brilliant hoax – reliant on jumpy, stressed footage originated by writer-directors Dan Geller and Dayna Goldfine (the makers of *Ballets Russes*) and contemporary actors. However, the interviews with present-day Galapagueños are clearly authentic, indicating that the silent 1930s sequences are docudramatic recreations a little less stylised than the African scenes in Miguel Gomes's *Tabu* (2012).

The revelation is that the 16mm home movie excerpts and the complementary stills actually derive from 1930s Floreana and that the people in them were real players in a sordid intrigue. Geller and Goldfine have explained that they met Margret Wittmer, then 95, on Floreana in 1998 and that the home-movie footage was discovered in a University of Southern California archive. It had mostly been filmed by W. Charles Swett, cinematographer and first officer on the scientific expedition led by the Los Angeles oil magnate George Allan Hancock to the Galápagos in 1933.

This means that Baroness Eloise von Wagner, Floreana's theatrical *femme fatale*, whose hubristic downfall might have inspired Josef von Sternberg, was the fantastical creation of no one but herself. The gem in the USC footage, included by Geller and Goldfine, was an amateurish movie, *The Empress of Floreana*, made by Hancock and the Baroness, in which she hams it up as a pirate queen who shoots a blonde castaway – played by one of Hancock's zoologists – so she can live in sin with the virile widower, who shoots the pirate queen's husband (played by Robert Philippon, one of the Baroness's lovers). In retrospect, this lark was a psychodrama that eerily prophesied the deaths of Philippon and Rudolph Lorenz, the Baroness's other lover, significantly blond, whose mummified corpse was filmed by the Hancock expedition in December 1934.

Like Murnau and Flaherty's *Tabu* (1931) and Gomes's homage, *The Galapagos Affair* belongs to the school of "white mischief" films, including *The Pleasure Garden* (1925), *White Shadows in the South Seas* (1928), *Coup de Torchon* Ⓜ



Island life: Baroness Eloise von Wagner

◀ (1981), *White Material* (2009) and *White Mischief* (1987) itself. Unlike those more expansive movies, though, it is not contextualised by the oppression of a native populace. Its central theme is the cruel survivalism – appropriately Darwinian given the Galápagos setting – to which humans will rapidly resort when they depart from civilisation. William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* and Kristian Levring's film *The King Is Alive* (2000) come to mind.

Several mysteries emerge: Did Lorenz kill the Baroness and Philippson because they maltreated him and threatened to desert him, and were Friedrich Ritter or the Wittmers involved in a cover-up? Was Ritter, the Nietzsche-obsessed misanthrope, poisoned by his mistress, Dore Strauch, because he bullied her? The sense of *schadenfreude* is enhanced by the irresolvability of these cases. It's too bad the film's cunning is diluted by the desultory comments of some of the interviewees. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Dayna Goldfine
Dan Geller
Producer
Celeste Schaefer
Snyder
Written by
Dan Geller
Dayna Goldfine
Celeste Schaefer
Snyder
Based on the books,
journals, articles
and letters of Dore
Strauch, Margret
Wittmer, Friedrich
Ritter, Heinz Wittmer,
John Garth
Edited by
Bill Weber
Music

Laura Karpman
Sound Designer
Roy Waldspurger

©Geller/Goldfine
Productions
**Production
Company**
Geller/Goldfine
Productions
presents
Executive Producer
Jonathan Dana

VOICE CAST

Cate Blanchett
Dore Strauch
Sebastian Koch
Heinz Wittmer

**Thomas
Kretschmann**
Friedrich Ritter
Diane Krüger
Margret Wittmer
Connie Nielsen
Baroness Eloise
von Wagner
Josh Radnor
John Garth
Gustaf Skarsgård
Rolf Blomberg
**In Colour and
Black and White**
[1.78:1]

Distributor
November Films

In the early 1930s, the uninhabited Galápagos island of Floreana was colonised by eight Germans and an Austrian. In 1934, two of them mysteriously disappeared and two died unnaturally.

Their history unfolds via silent home movie footage and photographs. Cate Blanchett and other stars read voiceover extracts from letters, journals and memoirs. The narrative enfolds the memories and speculations of current Santa Cruz islanders and Galápagos historians. Shots of sea, land, and wildlife punctuate the film.

The Berlin physician Friedrich Ritter and his mistress Dore Strauch settle on Floreana in 1929. They resent being joined, in 1931, by Heinz Wittmer – enticed by Ritter's published writings – his pregnant second wife Margret, and Heinz's teenage son, Harry. Ritter grudgingly delivers the Wittmers' baby, Rolf.

The arrival of the flamboyant Baroness Eloise von Wagner and her lovers, Robert Philippson and Rudolph Lorenz, shatters the fragile peace. She plans to build a hotel for passing yachtsmen. The Governor of Galápagos grants her four square miles of land, enraging Ritter and Wittmer.

Beaten by Philippson, Lorenz lodges with the Wittmers. In March 1934, she announces she and Philippson are departing for Tahiti. They go missing instead. Ritter dies from food poisoning in November. Lorenz leaves in a boat, anxious to reach Ecuador. His and the captain's mummified bodies are found on Marchena Island in December. Dore returns to Germany. The Wittmers thrive on Floreana, Margret surviving until 2000. Septuagenarians Rolf and sister Floreanita (born 1937) deny that living there as children frightened them.

Here and Now

United Kingdom 2013
Director: Lisle Turner
Certificate 12A 81m 39s

Reviewed by Jordan Cronk

Lisle Turner's debut feature, *Here and Now*, opens in a state of quiet observation as teen girl Grace (Lauren Johns) steals one last kiss from a boy standing in an alleyway as her parents, Ben (William Naylor) and Lucy (Susan Lynch), wait frustrated in the car. As the credits commence, the trio begin the drive from the rainy streets of east London to the sun-dappled hills of the Wye Valley. The scene, a fairly familiar introduction that nonetheless efficiently sets the narrative in motion, is cut to the rhythms of a blown-out hip-hop track, alternating from close-ups of Grace to medium shots of the family from outside the vehicle, a series of time-lapse transitions between our protagonist's increasingly disinterested expression and the changing landscapes which prompt her apathy. In and of itself the scene is unremarkable, and yet it represents the one dynamic moment in this otherwise exceedingly polite film.

As they arrive at their destination, settling into a remote country cottage, we continue to gather contextual information: Ben and Lucy's marriage is on the rocks, and they've retreated for summer holiday with their daughter Grace – a stylish, rough-around-the-edges secondary school pupil – in hopes of restoring frayed familial bonds. When Grace meets Say (Andy Rush), a reserved young man about her age, the two reluctantly begin to spend time together at the request of their elders. Without uttering much more than a word or two, Say guides Grace around the region's less frequented locales. She prefers cinema and the occasional inebriant; he leads her instead through fields, caves, lakes and ancient ruins. "History is, like, dead," Grace declares at one point, none too enthused about her acquaintance's idea of a good time. As the two continue to spend time together, awkward displays of attraction ensue while genuine feelings begin to accrue.

As a writer and director, Turner favours archetypes and aesthetic anonymity. His compositions are sleek and digitally buffed,



Wye knot: Andy Rush, Lauren Johns

reflecting little about the characters that we can't otherwise gather from their actions, while leaning on the inherent beauty of the locations rather than framing them in any manner other than their natural state. The score, by Jonny Pilcher, is saccharine, all stately piano motifs, acoustic interludes and pregnant ambiance – a far cry from the ornery opening tune, co-written by Pilcher and performed with Birmingham rapper TrueMendous Lady. Even the film's title feels generic and easily interchangeable with any number of seasonal coming-of-age tales.

One sequence manages to stand out amidst the banality. Roaming into a field of head-high corn stalks, Grace and Say stumble upon an abandoned rowing boat, miles away from the nearest river. It's a short scene that imbues the narrative with a hint of mysticism that the rest of the film could have benefitted from. In lieu of building on such ambiguity or, perhaps more topically, exploring issues of class, violence or economic hardship (all of which are hinted at), Turner operates strictly within the emotional purview of his characters, content to observe their melancholy rather than facilitate a similar sense of empathy on the part of the viewer. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Martina Klich
Written by
Lisle Turner
**Director of
Photography**
Will Humphris
Editor
Paul Monaghan
Production Designer
Fiona McLean
Original Music
Jonny Pilcher
Sound Recordists
Martyn Flint
Liam Cook
Costume Designer
Rosi Flood

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Films Ltd
**Production
Companies**
Creative England
presents a Wrapt
Films production
in association with
Revolution Films
A Lisle Turner film
Executive Producers
Kirk Brown

Reinette Brown
John Farquhar-Smith
Eli Segal
Andrew Eaton
Wendy Bevan-Mogg

CAST

Andy Rush
Sidney Arthur
Young, 'Say'
Lauren Johns
Grace
William Naylor
Ben
Susan Lynch
Lucy
Claire Coache
Poppy
Nikita Anderson
Whitney, Grace's
friend
Tabitha Porter
Kylie, Grace's friend
Dharmesh Patel
Karim
Jack Spreckley
Tony
Alex Evans
Jimmy

Anthony Murphy
Gaz
Steve Carpenter
Tony's dad

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Wrapt Films

Britain, the present. In an effort to save their marriage and mend family bonds, Ben and Lucy drag their daughter Grace, a rebellious east London teen, to a remote countryside cottage in the Wye Valley. Grace quickly meets Say, a quiet boy who, at the behest of his mother Poppy, reluctantly agrees to show Grace around town. The two accompany one another on daily journeys through the surrounding country, spending afternoons exploring fields, caves, lakes and ancient ruins. Emotions take hold and soon the pair spend all their free time together. Grace's parents are sceptical of the growing bond, which further alienates their daughter. Persuaded to attend a gathering at Poppy's house, Ben and Lucy learn of the tragic death of Poppy's husband, while Ben later serenades friends and family with an emotional performance on guitar. Inspired by this newfound sympathy, as well as Grace's accumulating affection, Say is able to confront his inner turmoil, returning to the scene of a horrific accident that has led him to his current state of muted reflection. With Grace's support, Say is able to open up and reconcile his emotions. With summer now over, Grace and Say must return to their everyday lives but their rendezvous may have changed their future.

Hide Your Smiling Faces

USA 2013

Director: Daniel Patrick Carbone

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

On a rocky river bank, a large snake is struggling to swallow a fish. The opening image of David Patrick Carbone's debut feature neatly encapsulates its three primary themes: water, the natural world, and death.

Very little in *Hide Your Smiling Faces* is specific, let alone explained. We seem to be somewhere in the north-eastern United States, possibly the rural fringes of New Jersey or Delaware, and the period could be the present, or almost any time in the past few decades. The action revolves around a violent death – a young boy, Ian, apparently fell from a disused railway viaduct – but whether he accidentally fell, jumped or was pushed is never revealed. And when 14-year-old Eric (Nathan Varnson) and his nine-year-old brother Tommy (Ryan Jones) head off in the middle of the night without telling their parents and stay out sleeping rough for at least one more night, we see no mention of a police hunt nor anything of the parents' reactions to their return. Far more concerned with mood than plot, Carbone leaves us to fill in the gaps in his story for ourselves. In the process of devising the script, he notes, "I realized that what was important wasn't really telling an accurate story, but to get to the emotional truth of being a kid and experiencing these difficult things and transitioning through different periods in your life."

At the heart of the film is the symbiotic accord between the two brothers – teasing, joking, occasionally edgy but evidently affectionate. Now and then, Eric bullies Tommy a little, as when he picks up the frantically protesting younger boy and dumps him in the lake to show him he can swim. Most of the time they look out for each other, a united front against an indifferent if not positively hostile world. Against this, the relationship between Eric and his morbid friend Tristan turns increasingly destructive, with Tristan asking, "Do you ever think about dying – someone killing you, or killing yourself?" and later pointing an air rifle at his friend. Something of his friend's worldview seems to infect Eric; after a wrestling-match between them turns acrimonious, it's he who holds a loaded pistol to Tristan's head. And as he and Tommy sit on the viaduct, the younger boy asks, "Have you ever thought of jumping?" "Yes, a little," his brother replies.

Dead bodies proliferate: not just Ian but birds, beetles, cats, dogs and a raccoon whose corpse Eric burns on a campfire before Tommy retrieves it and apologises to it, offering it a brief funeral oration. At times, the film feels like *Les jeux interdits* filtered through the sensibility of early David Gordon Green; there are nods, not least in the handling of the predominantly youthful cast and the use of atmospherically derelict industrial buildings, to *George Washington* (2000). But there's a melancholy poetry spliced with quiet humour (a scene where Tommy experiments with kissing his friend Blake through a transparent plastic sheet feels authentically silly and awkward) that makes *Smiling Faces* fresh and individual. Carbone, scripting and editing as well as directing, draws unaffected performances from his leads (both making their feature debut) in their interactions with each other and their group of friends – all male, since girls seem to be scarce in this society.



Those who trespass: Ryan Jones, Nathan Varnson

Adults don't play much part either, being largely absent or ineffectual. (In a rare lapse of tone, the god-bothering counsellor who attempts to comfort the boys after Ian's death is over-caricatured.) Ian's unnamed father (Colm O'Leary) is the only adult to make any impact, moving unpredictably from seething anger (even before his son dies) to grief-stricken, wordless tenderness in a disquieting scene with Tommy. Robert Donne's brooding, slow-shifting electro-acoustic score chimes with the prevailing mood, as do the slate-greys and

dark greens of the film's palette, set in heavily wooded landscapes where summer storms seem constantly to threaten; sunshine, metaphorical or actual, rarely manifests itself. When rain falls, as it does at the start and end of the film, it's with a heavy, sullen persistence, as though the lake and river that feature so strongly in the action were taking over the air as well. Carbone has created a shimmering, at times dreamlike world where youth is shadowed by thoughts of mortality, a film whose haunting effect belies its modest budget and brief running-time. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Matthew Petock
Zachary Shedd
Daniel Patrick Carbone
Jordan Bailey-Hoover
Written by
Daniel Patrick Carbone
Director of Photography

Nick Bentgen
Editor
Daniel Patrick Carbone
Production Designer
Charlotte Royer
Original Score
Robert Donne
Sound Recordist
Peter Townsend

©Hide Your Smiling Faces, LLC
Production Companies
Flies Collective presents
A film by Daniel Patrick Carbone
With support from IFF

Cast
Ryan Jones
Tommy
Nathan Varnson
Eric
Colm O'Leary
Ian's father
Thomas Cruz
Tristan
Christina Starbuck
Tommy and

Eric's mother
Chris Kies
Tommy and Eric's father
Andrew Chamberlain
Blake
Ivan Tomic
Ian
Clark Middleton
religious man
Annaliese

Jørgensen-Lockhart
drive-through employee
In Colour
[1.85:1]
Distributor
Matchbox Films

The north-east US, the present. Fourteen-year-old Eric, his friend Tristan, his nine-year-old brother Tommy and Tommy's friends Ian and Blake explore disused buildings along the riverfront and in the woods near where they live. Ian takes Tommy and Blake to his house, where he shows them his dad's revolver, kept in an outhouse. His father appears, angrily takes the gun from him and drives the others away. Eric and some of his friends hold wrestling matches in a field. Eric and Tristan, eating burgers on a disused rail viaduct, see a body below by the river's edge. It turns out to be Ian.

Ian's dad shows up at Eric and Tommy's house with their dog Daisy on a leash, and tells their mother he'll shoot the dog if it strays on his property again.

Tristan obsessively talks about death with Eric. In the woods, Eric and Tommy find a heap of dead animals, cats and dogs. They leave a dead cat outside Ian's dad's house. Looking for Daisy, Tommy finds her in the road tethered to a concrete block. He tells Eric, who takes him to Ian's dad's house, throws the block through a window, enters and starts smashing the place up. Tommy takes the gun from the outhouse.

One night, Eric wakes Tommy and takes him on his bike to the viaduct; they camp out for two nights. Eric takes the gun and after wrestling with Tristan threatens him with it, before running off into the woods where he meets a bear. Tommy climbs into Ian's dad's house; the man is there and grabs him, then strokes his face before letting him go.

The House of Magic

France/Luxembourg/France 2013
Directors: Jérémie Degruuson, Ben Stassen
Certificate U 85m 13s

Reviewed by Kate Stables

Forget that the now-ubiquitous 3D has been a vertiginous blight on the family films of the last few years, muddying colours and skewing plots. In Jérémie Degruuson and Ben Stassen's slight but charmingly animated tale of a kitten taking on all comers to protect his new home, ingenious 3D work is the film's chief strength. Unlike Stassen's previous films (*A Turtles Tale: Sammy's Adventures*, *Sammy's Great Escape*), there's a deftness and delicacy to the film's cat's-eye-view. Scrambling through rooms of pinging magic-show paraphernalia, a whooshing flight on a Chinese-dragon rocket, swooping on a wrecking ball – every sequence is tailored for delight rather than in-your-face spectacle. Would that the script, which is basically a feline take on *Home Alone*, had the same level of inventive, detailed care lavished on it. A generic tale of villains rebuffed by the team efforts of toys and quarrelling animals, it lacks the distinct characterisation and verbal play that even small children, reared on the *Toy Story* and *Madagascar* series, have come to expect. Voice-work and dialogue are less foregrounded than the cutely retro animation, rendering automata like enchanted light-bulb Edison just expressive enough to be appealing rather than memorable. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Ben Stassen
Caroline Van Iseghem
Screenplay
James Flynn
Dominic Paris
Ben Stassen
Story
Ben Stassen
Art Direction
Jérémie Degruuson

Music
Composed by
Ramin Djawadi
Sound Design
Yves Renard
Pierre 'Lele' Lebecque
Animation Supervisor
Dirk de Loose

©nWave Pictures SA
Production Companies
StudioCanal
presents a nWave Pictures production in association with Anton Capital Entertainment, S.C.A.
Produced with the support of the Tax Shelter of the

Belgian Federal Government
In association with uFilm
Supported by the Flanders Audiovisual Fund
Executive Produced by
Olivier Courson
Eric Dillens

VOICE CAST

Cinda Adams
Nurse Baxter
George Babbitt
Carlo/Jack/Zoltar, fortune teller
Murray Blue
Thunder/Dylan
Kathleen Browers
Carla
Joey Camen
Chihuahua
Grant George
Daniel
Shanelle Gray
Maggie
Nina Grillo
Audrey
Kyle Hebert
Mark Matthews
Doug Stone
Lawrence

Dolby Digital In Colour [1.85:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor
Studiocanal Limited
Belgian theatrical title
Le Manoir magique

Boston, present day. A plucky abandoned ginger kitten is adopted by retired magician Lawrence and named Thunder. White mouse Maggie and rabbit Jack vow to get rid of him. Thunder accidentally causes a bicycle crash and Lawrence is hospitalised. His realtor nephew Daniel tries to sell Lawrence's large house and appropriate the proceeds. Thunder organises the house's animals and magic automata to see off potential buyers and removals men by impersonating ghosts and haunted objects. Daniel takes a wrecking ball to the house, but Thunder and Maggie band together and outmanoeuvre him. Lawrence banishes Daniel and gives a magic show for sick children.

How to Train Your Dragon 2

USA 2014
Director: Dean DeBlois
Certificate PG 101m 47s

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

The posters for *How to Train Your Dragon 2* read "Training is Over". This gives one pause to wonder what, exactly, the movie is going to be about. Fortunately, a bit more thought has been put into the tentpole picture itself, Dreamworks Animation's sequel to 2010's *How to Train Your Dragon*, than to the clashing title and tagline.

The personnel from the first film are more or less in place, with Dean DeBlois (*Lilo & Stitch*), who co-directed last time, carrying the sole credit here, while the returning vocal talents of Jay Baruchel (Hiccup) and Gerard Butler (Stoick) are joined by Cate Blanchett, playing Hiccup's long-lost mother Valka, who first appears in an ominous costume that makes her resemble nothing so much as a member of the nu metal outfit Slipknot.

Also returning is "visual consultant" Roger Deakins, the Coen brothers' cinematographer, who, along with a vast army of faceless pixel-pushers, contributes to the film's never-dull compositional choices. Most interesting here is the simultaneous staging of action in foreground and background planes, usually to counterpoise the human drama with dragons at play or, in the two gargantuan battles that end the film, locked in combat. The movie gets much mileage from the idea that domesticated dragons are essentially big, scaly dogs – and, like dogs, they tend to resemble their owners, both physically and in personality. In the case of Drago Bludvist, a dreadlocked, gray-visaged would-be conqueror voiced by Djimon Hounsou, this is a problem. (In more ways than one, if you ruminate for any amount of time on the racial politics of the thing – there's a touch of Jafar-in-*Aladdin* villain profiling here.)

"Good people under the control of bad people do bad things," Hiccup says, paraphrasing the old 'Guns Don't Kill People, People Do' bumper sticker. This is not to imply that *How to Train Your Dragon 2* has any mapped-out agenda, conservative or liberal; it mostly settles for ethical vagaries as fuzzy as the impeccably-rendered peachy down on Hiccup's chin. Drago

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Bonnie Arnold
Written by
Dean DeBlois
Based upon the *How to Train Your Dragon* book series by Cressida Cowell
Visual Consultant
Roger Deakins
Editor
John K. Carr
Production Designer
Pierre-Olivier Vincent, 'POV'
Music
John Powell
Supervising Sound Designer
Randy Thom
Animation Supervisors
James Baxter
Steven 'Shaggy' Hornby
Jakob Hjort Jensen
Fabio Lignini
Sean Sexton
David Torres

©DreamWorks Animation LLC
Production Company
DreamWorks Animation SKG
Executive Producers
Dean DeBlois
Chris Sanders

VOICE CAST

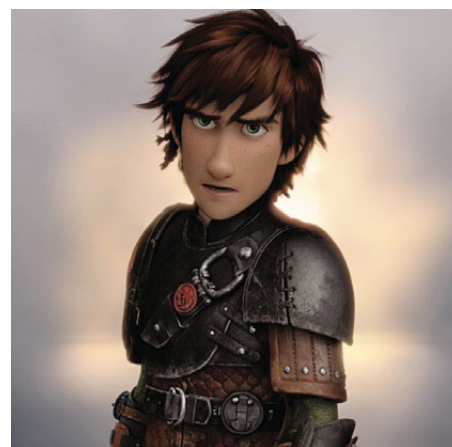
Jay Baruchel
Hiccup
Cate Blanchett
Valka
Gerard Butler
Stoick the Vast
Craig Ferguson
Gobber
America Ferrera
Astrid
Jonah Hill
Snotlout
Christopher Mintz-Plasse
Fishlegs
T.J. Miller
Tuffnut

Kristen Wiig
Ruffnut
Djimon Hounsou
Drago Bludvist
Kit Harington
Eret

Dolby Atmos/Datasat/SDDS In Colour Prints by DeLuxe [2.35:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor
20th Century Fox International (UK)



Scaled up: *How to Train Your Dragon 2*

regards dragons as useful only as instruments of violence and power, while the Berkians are good-natured down-home Teutons who use them for proto-NASCAR racing meets. It's here, when the movie takes to the air reeling and wheeling, that it shows its reason for being, barrel-rolling through aerodynamic manoeuvres worthy of Bill Wellman's *Wings*, albeit against a backdrop that has the quality of Skittles-commercial fantasy art about it. The effects offer further proof that CGI is capable of the highest level of hyperreality even amid pure fancy; when the characters are airborne, every ripple of wind resistance is felt, every crystal of frost that collects in a Viking moustache detailed. What's absent, however, is any gesture towards minimalism, with the resulting sense of line or painterly subtraction. In Valka's dragon sanctuary, something like a butterfly show, all the colours known in the natural world – and many that are not – are on-screen at once but rather than radiance the effect is something like a puddle of sick after a binge on sweets. The rainbow is briefly muted for Stoick's Viking funeral, which offers evidence of some kind of virtuosity at work here, though mostly struggling to free itself from treacle. Ⓢ

The Village of Berk, a place resembling medieval Scandinavia. Years have passed since the events of 'How to Train Your Dragon' and the Berkians, once locked in perpetual war with dragons, have domesticated the creatures and race them for sport. Chief Stoick the Vast wants his son, Hiccup, to follow him as head of the village but Hiccup prefers mapping the unknown world on the back of his dragon, Toothless. On one of his trips, Hiccup runs afoul of dragon trapper Eret, who is raising an army of dragons for Drago Bludvist. Hiccup reports this to his father, who prepares Berk for war, though Hiccup departs to try to reason with Drago. En route, he encounters dragon rider Valka, the keeper of a dragon sanctuary and, incidentally, Hiccup's long-lost, assumed-dead mother. Stoick follows Hiccup to the sanctuary and is about to be reconciled with Valka when Drago attacks. Stoick is killed, and Drago wrangles Valka's dragons using a telepathic Alpha dragon, before laying siege to Berk.

Valka, Hiccup and his friends give pursuit and, arriving as the battle begins, manage to wrest mental control of the dragons away from Drago using old-fashioned loyalty rather than brute force. The siege is broken and we last see Berk in the process of rebuilding.

How We Used to Live

United Kingdom 2013
Director: Paul Kelly

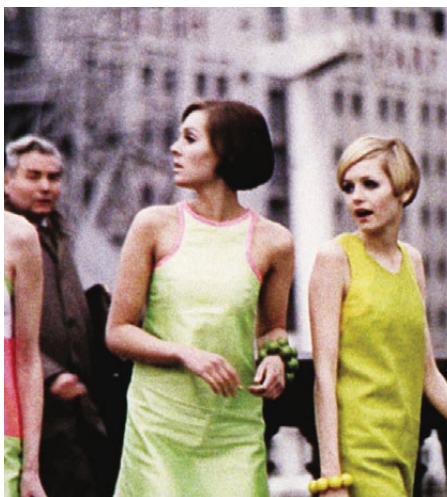
Reviewed by Hannah McGill

How We Used to Live borrows its title from the late-1960s Yorkshire Television series that followed a Northern English family through changing social circumstances from the Victorian era to the 1960s. Along with an associated series of books, the programme featured in the history classes of many British children for years after its initial transmission. The use of the title here refers to its previous appropriation for a track on the 2000 album *Sound of Water* by the English pop band St Etienne, whose members Bob Stanley and Pete Wiggs here provide script and score respectively; but also to the fact that the childhood memories of the generation that watched the original series at school are now themselves the stuff of history. Drawing on a vast range of footage from the BFI Archive, this essay-collage pays light, affectionate tribute to London's post-war evolution.

Uncredited snatches of archive audio comment on or provide context for the visuals – or are included just for laughs – while a sparse, sporadic voiceover offers gently ironic contributions by an anonymous Londoner played by Ian McShane.

Like director Paul Kelly's previous collaborations with St Etienne – *Finisterre* (2003), *What Have You Done Today Mervyn Day?* (2005) and *This Is Tomorrow* (2007) – *How We Used to Live* has a clear progenitor in Patrick Keiller's *London* (1994). But while the stylistic debt is evident, this is lighter and more upbeat, with a tendency towards gently poetic, open-ended musings on the life of the capital ("The endless city, with its cars driving ceaselessly down concrete roads to unknown destinations"), rather than Keiller's more pointed political and cultural observations. That said, hints of a backstory for McShane's character ("I gave a song to the Rolling Stones," he notes as the 1960s kick off. "They gave it back") seem expressly to pay homage to Keiller's pensive, irascible, unreliable version of the recurring psychogeographic anti-hero Robinson.

Other audio comes in the form of music, including new St Etienne compositions on a retro-pop theme; and archive scraps, which offer vaguely heartwarming, apolitical kitsch, and indicators of how certain attitudes have changed. A survivor of World War II intones that "you were part of the war even before you were born – we were fighting for you"; Mrs Elsie Allen



Swing when you're winning: *How We Used to Live*

requests a "gay tune" from *Housewives' Choice* for her hospital-bound sister Mabel and any others who "can't get about very much". Members of Parliament are congratulated for living on "a modest wage", while the prime minister, we hear, "lives like a professional man in a plain house on the side of a narrow cul-de-sac". Gap-toothed moppets doing cute things feature heavily, as do gyrating dollybirds and gauche celebrities of the time; Twiggy romping around with her frail limbs and hunched shoulders; record producer Mickie Most going for a supremely self-conscious jog, dressed in brown nylon shirt and slacks.

The effect of the collage approach is diverting but somewhat flattening: nuclear panic and bombed-out buildings lined up as kitsch spectacles alongside fashion shoots and nightclub freakouts. Though change is emphasised in parts of the voiceover – economic and political forces are "at work behind the landscape, shaping it, forever changing it"; London is "continually flickering and fluctuating" – the film's closing note emphasises continuity. "I came back the other day," says our narrator, lightly. "Nothing had changed." Don't worry about whatever decay, corruption or silliness you seem to see around you, would seem to be the undercurrent – it will all wash by, like the grubbily lovable Thames, and one day we will look back on it all with loving smiles. 📺

I Am Divine

USA 2013
Director: Jeffrey Schwarz

Reviewed by Alex Davidson

More than 25 years after his death, Divine, the drag alter ego of Harris Glen Milstead, is still a much-loved counterculture figure. His severe look and outré antics in the work of director John Waters still shock decades later, and his determination to stand out from the '60s drag queens determined to look pretty and girlish by playing a belligerent hag still seems radical in the current world of drag pageants.

I Am Divine is Schwarz's third feature-length documentary to focus on a gay subject, following *Wrangler: Anatomy of an Icon* (2008), about porn star Jack Wrangler, and *Vito* (2011), about activist Vito Russo. Although familiarity with the subject could result in a lack of fresh insight here – Divine is better known than either Wrangler or Russo – the film nevertheless contains many intriguing snapshots from its subject's life. Perversely, one of the most shocking revelations about the man who embodied such a flamboyant and confrontational figure is that he was a shy teenager who had a girlfriend, interviewed in the film.

Milstead's story is so closely linked to John Waters, one of modern cinema's great raconteurs, that there is a risk of simply rehashing the director's greatest stories – anyone who's listened to Waters's wry DVD commentaries will already know a lot about Divine, and indeed he's terrific value. Thankfully the infinitely recycled story of Divine eating dog shit at the end of *Pink Flamingos* (1972) is given only a minute of screen-time.

The commentary from Milstead's mother, Frances (who died in 2009), offers more complexity. Her frank testimony of her ruthless rejection of her son when he came out is startling, while their eventual reconciliation a few years before his death offers the most poignant arc of all. In a mischievous juxtaposition, Schwarz plays Milstead's recollection of praying that her son would never embarrass her over a scene of Divine being raped by a giant lobster in *Multiple Maniacs* (1970).

One of Milstead's most endearing traits was his refusal to compromise his look – even when he found mainstream success he remained a grotesque, the ugly duckling who refused to become a swan. Despite this, Schwarz's film shows a man with a need for approval who yearned for (and, by the end of his life, achieved) critical success and, despite fearless feats of grossness, turned into a shy schoolboy when acting a love scene with matinee



Shy boy: Divine

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Martin Kelly
Written by
Bob Stanley
Travis Elborough
Edited by
Paul Kelly
Music
Pete Wiggs
Dubbing Mixer
Andy Coles
Archive Supervisor
John Carino
Archive Research
Paul Kelly
Bob Stanley
Travis Elborough

Production Companies

Heavenly Films and
Bedlam Productions
present a film
by Paul Kelly
Made in association
with the BFI National
Archive and Peter
Werth London Limited
A Heavenly Films
production in
association with
Bedlam Productions
and the BFI
National Archive
Executive Producer
Simon Egan

Narrated by
Ian McShane

In Colour
[1.33:1]

Distributor
Heavenly Films

London, between the 1950s and 1980s. A collage of archive footage depicts daily life in the latter half of the 20th century, from the clearing of devastated buildings and instigation of the welfare state in the aftermath of the Second World War through the pop culture explosion of the 1960s and '70s to the brief flourishing of punk and the premiership of Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. London is depicted as the home of art both populist and elite; of money and money-making, juxtaposed with graffiti and skateboarding; of politicians and celebrities; of evolving industrial and social building projects; and of the tenacious remnants of empire. Music, archive interviews and news reports combine with occasional interjections from a playful anonymous narrator who seeks to identify the character of London – a thing at once fluid and eternally the same.

idol Tab Hunter in *Polyester* (Hunter, a formerly closeted gay actor, is the subject of Schwarz's next film). Seeing clips from his movies together, it's notable how quickly Milstead improved as a performer, and while his portrayals in Waters's most extreme titles are his most famous legacy, he was at his best in quieter roles, such as the downtrodden housewife in *Polyester* (1981) or, out of drag, the gangster in Alan Rudolph's *Trouble in Mind* (1985).

While Divine's movie career is well-documented, his theatre work is less discussed, and there is some valuable footage of his performance in Tom Eyan's drag favourite *Women Behind Bars*, while his co-star in its sequel, Helen Hanft, who died shortly after *I Am Divine* was finished, is one of the most engaging talking heads. The low quality of Divine's surprisingly successful pop career – the nearest he ever ventured into pantomime dame territory, growling out Hi-NRG camp anthems – is quickly brushed over.

While there are too many interviewees, some of whom never met Divine and almost all of which are wholly celebratory (a couple of concerns about drug use and weight issues notwithstanding), the few shortcomings of Schwarz's film are outweighed by the infectious joy and love shown towards this unlikely national treasure. While some rue the fact he died just as he achieved mainstream success, Waters's insistence that this is in fact a happy ending is a far more tempting coda. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Jeffrey Schwarz
Jon Glover
Lotti Phariss-
Knowles

Camera

Lance Robertson
John Chater
John Davis
Daniel DeJesus
David Ford
Marsha Kahn
Cameron MacDonald
James Mulryan
Elle Schneider
Steven Wacks
Clay Westervelt

Edited by

Phillip J. Bartell

Original Score

Michael 'The
Millionaire' Cudahy
Production Sound
Paul Buscemi
Dan Greene
Mark Orzel
Jim Siler

Petr Stepanek
Gary Stevenson
Chris White

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Production Companies

Automat Pictures
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Documentary
Association

Film Extracts

Pink Flamingos

(1972)

Female Trouble

(1974)

Polyester (1981)

Trouble in Mind

(1985)

*Lust in the
Dust* (1985)

*Vargtimmen/Hour
of the Wolf* (1968)

*The Girl Can't
Help It* (1956)
*The Girl He Left
Behind* (1956)

In Colour
[1.78:1]

Distributor

Peccadillo
Pictures Ltd

A documentary in which friends, family and cultural commentators remember the life of Harris Glen Milstead (1945-1988), who found fame as outrageous drag queen Divine. Overweight and effeminate, Milstead had a tough childhood in Baltimore, Maryland. As a teenager he met filmmaker John Waters, and they made several films together in which Milstead plays Divine, a grotesque and aggressive woman, including 'Pink Flamingos' (1972), which caused notoriety for a scene in which Divine eats dog faeces. Although Milstead continued to work with Waters, he also embarked on other projects, enjoying a successful stage and music career. After getting some of the best reviews of his career in Waters's film 'Hairspray' (1988), Milstead died in his sleep, aged 42.

Jersey Boys

USA 2014

Director: Clint Eastwood

Certificate 15 134m 12s

Reviewed by Sam Davies

If you're wondering how Clint Eastwood would approach directing the first musical of his behind-camera career, my answer would be that arguably, he hasn't. *Jersey Boys* is a bona fide Broadway and West End smash of course – but it's not the kind of musical in which the leads burst into spontaneous song to express their feelings as crowds of extras fall into co-ordinated choreography behind them. Not an umbrella is twirled, not a lamppost swung around. *Jersey Boys* is essentially a group biopic with musical interludes, tracing the career of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons from their blue-collar, petty-crime background in Belleville, New Jersey, to chart domination and then disastrous recriminations over gambling debts and financial mismanagement. This means the Four Seasons' music flows naturally out of the narrative as it develops. We hear Valli for the first time as he performs a guest spot for his friend Tommy DeVito's group in a nightclub set. An audition for songwriter and keyboardist Bob Gaudio shows the Four Seasons finalise their line-up. Recording sessions, gigs and TV appearances sprinkle the group's hits – 'Sherry', 'Big Girls Don't Cry', 'Walk Like a Man' – through the film. In this sense, it is indistinguishable from other recent portraits of American music legends such as *Ray* (2005) or *Walk the Line* (2008), neither of which are thought of as musicals.

Eastwood maintains that naturalism by having the cast sing in their own voices, and has cherry-picked performers from different stage productions of *Jersey Boys* to aid the process. It works, although John Lloyd Young in the central role of Valli is occasionally a weak link. Young originated the role and his theatrical performances have won numerous awards, but he seems exposed under the closer scrutiny of the camera, and certainly lacks the

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Clint Eastwood
Graham King
Robert Lorenz

Screenplay

Marshall Brickman

Rick Elice

Based on the stage

play *Jersey Boys: The*

Story of Frankie Valli

& The Four Seasons

Book by Marshall

Brickman, Rick Elice

Song music by Bob

Gaudio and lyrics

by Bob Crewe

Director of

Photography

Tom Stern

Edited by

Joel Cox

Gary D. Roach

Production

Designed by

James J. Murakami

Sound Mixer

Walt Martin

Costumes

Designed by

Deborah Hopper

Choreography

Sergio Trujillo

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Entertainment

Inc., RatPac-Dune
Entertainment
LLC, RatPac
Entertainment LLC

Production Companies

Warner Bros. Pictures
presents a GK Films,
Malpaso production
in association
with RatPac-Dune
Entertainment

With the participation
of Province of British
Columbia Production
Services Tax Credit

Executive Producers

Frankie Valli

Bob Gaudio

Tim Moore

Tim Headington

Brett Ratner

James Packer

Steven Murchison

Film Extracts

Ace in the Hole (1951)

CAST

John Lloyd Young

Frankie Valli

Erich Bergen

Bob Gaudio

Michael Lomenda

Nick Massi

Vincent Piazza

Tommy DeVito

Christopher Walken

Gyp DeCarlo

Mike Doyle

Bob Crewe

Renée Marino

Mary

Erica Piccininni

Lorraine

Steven R. Schirripa

Vito

Kathrine Narducci

Frankie's mother

Lou Volpe

Frankie's father

**Dolby Digital/
Datasat**

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Warner Bros

Distributors (UK)



Tin pan Valli: Michael Lomenda

charisma of Vincent Piazza (Lucky Luciano in *Boardwalk Empire*) as Tommy DeVito.

But *Jersey Boys* does depart from the taciturn and occasionally gimlet-eyed severity that's characterised much of Eastwood's last decade of filmmaking, and does so with an enjoyable relish. Clearly the gang dynamic in which Valli and the Four Seasons are goodfellas in close harmony, blue-collar kids on the make, is a hook for Eastwood's sensibility – as Tommy DeVito puts it, they had three options: join the army and get killed, join the mob and get killed, or get famous. But *Jersey Boys* has an easygoing, garrulous flow to it, typified by the way characters such as DeVito, Bob Gaudio and bassist Nick Massi break the fourth wall and narrate straight to camera, which is hard to resist. There's also a willingness to play broad. Some lines have a clunking obviousness that undermines the scenes of family breakdown and grief. But others have a kind of dumb genius to them, such as when the group finally settles on its name while looking at the blinking lettering outside the Four Seasons motel: "It's a sign!" Christopher Walken's cameo as geriatric mob boss Gyp DeCarlo, meanwhile, is played as pure comedy – if he shuffled off frame it would be straight into *Prizzi's Honor*, not *Mean Streets*. **S**

Belleville, New Jersey, 1951. Tommy DeVito is getting nowhere with his group, not helped by their run-ins with the law and spells in prison. He decides to build the group around his discovery Frankie Castelluccio and his extraordinary falsetto voice, but with little success. Castelluccio changes his name to Valli and when the group are introduced to a local songwriter with one novelty hit to his name, Bob Gaudio, convinces DeVito to make him part of the group. Gaudio sees the potential in Valli's voice and begins to write for it. They secure a record deal, but only get their own recording session when DeVito borrows enough money from a loan shark to pay for it himself. As the Four Seasons they soon have a string of huge hits to their name. But DeVito, still acting as their manager, is hiding the extent of his gambling debts and borrowing heavily from the groups's tax account. The demands of success and touring strain relationships within the group and with their families. Tensions come to a head with a visit from the loan shark. DeVito is kicked out of the group, but Valli insists the debt will be honoured, out of loyalty to DeVito, and commits to a relentless work schedule. His marriage breaks up and his daughter, whose singing career he'd hoped to nurture, dies of a drug overdose. Valli pays the debt in full and his career is revived when he records a new Gaudio song, 'Can't Take My Eyes Off You'. The film concludes with The Four Seasons reunited in 1990 for their induction into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame.

Jimmy's Hall

United Kingdom/France/Ireland/Belgium/Japan 2014
Director: Ken Loach
Certificate 12A 108m 59s

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

If this is indeed Ken Loach's final feature, as the director himself has indicated, he bows out with no sign of diminution in his powers. Vividly contemporary stories from *Cathy Come Home* and *Kes* through to *Riff-Raff* and *Sweet Sixteen* certainly made and sustained his name yet Loach has always thrived on historical subject matter. Be it tackling the Spanish Civil War in *Land and Freedom*, the Irish War of Independence in *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* or even the formative years of the British trade union movement in his 1975 BBC miniseries *Days of Hope*, hindsight has often allowed him and his screenwriters to pick out and dramatise key moments of ideological conflict, those contexts where the politics very much rise to the surface. The advantage in this particular instance, though, is that regular writer Paul Laverty has zeroed in on relatively unfamiliar terrain, taking elements from the life of social activist Jimmy Gralton – a caption says the film is 'inspired by' his story – to shed light on the authoritarian early years of Irish independence. After years of turmoil, De Valera's nascent régime unsurprisingly sought stability above all, resulting in a significant surge in social and constitutional influence for the Catholic church, who then shaped an unlikely common front across an acquiescent, divided IRA (who'd fought for independence and sided with De Valera's anti-treaty forces in the subsequent Civil War), and indeed a resurgent landowning class, all of them bound to resist anything resembling leftist dissent at the individual rights being suppressed in the meantime.

Clearly, these are key moments in shaping the essentially conservative Irish state that was to solidify (perhaps even stagnate) over the subsequent decades but it also gives the story a monolithically oppressive target to rail against. Loach's work is sometimes at its least effective when the ideology and the drama aren't quite in sync, the slightly preachy *Route Irish* being one recent example, yet that's far from the case here, since Gralton's ideals and his struggle are so evidently grounded in relatable everyday realities, powered by an understandable drive to broaden his community's horizons through education, help them connect with their own cultural heritage through exploring Irish literature and song, and also give everyone a bit of a dance on a Saturday night. Pitching jazz-loving kids versus uptight clergy set against the alien menace of dangerous rhythms and 'pelvic thrusts' almost recalls the world of Mickey Rooney and puttin' on the show in the barn, yet *Jimmy's Hall* is none the worse for relishing the value of a bloody good time. If Loach seems ostensibly to be lightening up, all the while showing a relaxed yet indisputable formal command as his camera hangs back and observes the convincingly down-home fun, the welcoming naturalism of these communal moments of course stealthily sweetens the underlying political agenda.

Plot-wise, the unfolding events are about as predictable as those very same old-school musicals, here tracing a fairly standard-issue escalation in hostilities, yet somehow the passions overall don't quite burn as brightly as they did in *Land and Freedom* or *The Wind That*



Community spirit: Barry Ward

Shakes the Barley. Perhaps Barry Ward's central turn as Gralton lacks that last flicker of incendiary charisma, no matter how much we empathise with his cause, though it may also be that the character who commands most attention isn't in this case the lefty firebrand or the typically Loachian ordinary Joe undergoing an awakening of political consciousness but the nominal villain of the piece. Jim Norton's Father Sheridan presents himself as the focal point of Catholic intransigence yet in private we also realise the degree to which his spiritual certainties are given a thorough testing in a way that has him admiringly comparing Gralton's principled stand with the travails of the early Christian martyrs.

In the end, however, Gralton's best efforts prove unequal to the establishment's authority and deceit, though not before his speech about witnessing the calamitous social legacy of the 1929 stock market crash has provided the story with a tellingly valid point of comparison with our own troubled economic times.

The real-life Gralton was deported without trial, never to return, yet by closing what could well be his own celluloid departure on a poised freeze-frame of eager young folk ready to continue the good fight, Loach affectingly leaves the door open to hope. Will the next generation of British filmmakers be ready, willing or indeed capable of building on his not inconsiderable legacy? 

Credits and Synopsis

Producer
Rebecca O'Brien
Screenplay
Paul Laverty
Director of Photography
Robbie Ryan
Editor
Jonathan Morris
Production Designer
Fergus Clegg
Composer
George Fenton
Sound Recordist
Ray Beckett
Costume Designer
Eimer Ní Mhaoldomhnaigh

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Production Companies
Sixteen Films, Why Not Productions, Wild Bunch,

Element Pictures
Funders: BFI, Film4, Bord Scannán na hÉireann/The Irish Film Board, France 2 Cinéma, Canal +, Cine +, Le Pacte, Les Films du Fleuve, Longridge Inc., France Télévisions
Developed with the support of the MEDIA Programme of the European Union
Made with the support of the BFI's Film Fund
Executive Producers
Pascal Caucheteux
Grégoire Sorlat
Vincent Maraval
Andrew Lowe
Ed Guiney

CAST

Barry Ward
Jimmy Gralton
Simone Kirby
Oonagh
Jim Norton
Father Sheridan
Francis Magee
Mossie
Aisling Franciosi
Marie

Andrew Scott
Father Seamus
Brian F. O'Byrne
Commander O'Keefe
Aileen Henry
Alice
Stella McGill
Stella
Sorcha Fox
Molly
Martin Lucey
Dessie
Mikel Murfi
Tommy
Shane O'Brien
Finn
Denise Gough
Tess

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
E! Films

County Leitrim, 1932. After 10 years in American exile, Jimmy Gralton returns to his home village, where he's welcomed by old friends, his elderly mother and young people eager for him to reopen a community hall disused since his departure. Jimmy and the villagers had built it as a venue for adult education classes but attracted the opposition of the Catholic church, and when Jimmy sided with a dispossessed tenant in a land dispute, threats from the establishment forced him to depart for New York, leaving behind his girlfriend Oonagh. Now she's married with two kids but feelings remain as Jimmy successfully re-opens the hall, which puts on jazz bands as well as traditional Irish music and poetry classes. Father Sheridan's attitude remains resolutely negative, even if he personally admires Jimmy's principled stand. Meanwhile, the church's position has strengthened in the early years of independence, since priests, former IRA men and landowners alike now find common cause against potential 'communist' insurgency. Jimmy becomes a figurehead for dissent, and when dissident former IRA men persuade Jimmy to speak at a demonstration supporting a tenant family evicted by an aristocratic landowner, he becomes a target for the forces of authority. The minister of justice conjures up a legal technicality whereby Jimmy's US passport makes him an illegal alien, and he flees into the countryside. After his capture, he's deported without trial, but not before one last show of solidarity from the local youth who promise to sustain his values in future.

Joe

USA 2013

Director: David Gordon Green

Certificate 15 117m 4s

See
Development
Tale on
page 12

Reviewed by Ryan Gilbey

Film trivia quiz teams of the future will be stumped by the question: "Which movie with a one-word, three-letter title, from a director influenced

by Terrence Malick, starred Tye Sheridan as a young boy befriending a violent loner in the contemporary South?" The description fits both Jeff Nichols's *Mud* (2012), in which the blunt-faced Sheridan was one of two teenagers who gravitated towards a fugitive (Matthew McConaughey), and David Gordon Green's *Joe*, where Nicolas Cage is the volatile father figure. Not that the adolescent Gary is lacking one of those. The film begins with the boy being punched in the face by his actual father, the sozzled, psychopathic Wade (played by the non-professional actor Gary Poulter, who died shortly after filming). It is the first of many beatings the old soak dishes out. One of those, administered with a wrench on a homeless man, is sustained and explicit enough to have audiences whimpering for the comforts of the fire extinguisher scene in *Irréversible*.

The picture, adapted by Gary Hawkins from the novel by Larry Brown, locates Gary between two imperfect male role models, one of whom is at least trying to hold a lid on his rage. "What keeps me alive is restraint," Joe confesses. "Most moments I shouldn't do what I wanna do."

There is a pleasing synchronicity between Joe's attempts to stem his temper and the effort made by Cage to keep his own actorly excesses in check. A handful of shots could reasonably end up in the widely-seen YouTube montage of tantrums and wig-outs entitled *Nicolas Cage Losing His Shit* – notably his apoplectic rage (mirrored in a jangling bells-and-whistles score by Jeff McIlwain and David Wingo) when confronted with a belligerent guard dog: "I love dogs! Just not that dog! That dog is an asshole!"

For the most part, this is a saner, quieter Cage. His riffs are limited to juicy bonding scenes with his young co-star, such as the acting lessons Joe gives Gary while they mooch around a motorboat junkyard ("Show me pain. Now smile. No. Smile *on top of the pain*"). Despite his charisma, the movie doesn't let us forget that Joe is only a few notches up from Wade. One element that distinguishes Green as a filmmaker is his reluctance to sentimentalise Joe, or to entirely demonise Wade. For all that his emotional nerve endings are dead, the old man is permitted a tender scene of mutual buffoonery with his son that is no less poignant for being anomalous. Both Joe and Wade are products of a culture where violence, machismo and poverty are inseparable. The challenge for Gary is to survive untainted. Green ends the film by repeating a composition used in the opening shot to suggest that the odds are in his favour.

Those looking for further evidence of doubling might care to know that Green calls *Joe* the "dark, disturbing older brother" to his whimsical 2013 buddy movie *Prince Avalanche*. The films share the Texan woodland landscape (Cage helped Green scout locations on *Prince Avalanche*) and a 1970s grammar (crash-zooms being a particular favourite) but the view of nature is different. Bucolic in the earlier movie, in *Joe* it's a place of savagery and



Bad blood: Nicolas Cage, Tye Sheridan

toxicity. Joe leads a team of labourers who kill off forests with "juice hatchets" that weaken the trees in advance of the lumber companies coming in to clear the land for development. Joe spends his life literally poisoning nature.

Green's regular cinematographer, Tim Orr, brings to the exteriors his characteristically ripe, rich palette. Less predictable is the way the apparently squalid interiors compete in this aesthetic beauty contest. Sunlight blasts through coloured curtains, drenching one room in a brothel a lush orange, the next a ridiculous pink that tickles the eye. Divisions between external and internal, home and nature, are being eroded subtly. A pastoral scene of dogs at play is stitched onto Joe's furniture; in his neighbours' house hangs a freshly slaughtered

deer from which Joe rips the skin as though peeling a wetsuit from a diver's body.

The argument that Green is a director whose work can be divided easily into arthouse (such as his first two films, *George Washington* and *All the Real Girls*) and the disreputable mainstream (stoner comedies like *Pineapple Express* and *Your Highness*) has lost traction with *Prince Avalanche* and *Joe*. (It doesn't look likely to fall back into favour either with his next film, the low-budget thriller *Manglehorn*, starring Al Pacino.) Affection for the overcooked, offhand violence of 1980s exploitation runs through most of his work (including the comedies). More vivid, though, is the relish, shared with countrymen like Howard Hawks, Jonathan Demme and David O. Russell, for people, community and toil. 🍷

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Lisa Muskat
David Gordon Green
Christopher Woodrow
Derrick Tseng
Written by
Gary Hawkins
Based on the novel
by Larry Brown
**Director of
Photography**
Tim Orr
Edited by
Colin Patton
Production Designer
Chris Spellman
Music
David Wingo
Jeff McIlwain
Sound Mixer
Christof Gebert
Costume Designer
Jill Newell
Karen Malecki

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**Production
Companies**
Worldview

Entertainment in
association with
Dreambridge Films
presents a Muskat
Filmed Properties/
Rough House
Pictures production
Executive Producers
Molly Connors
Maria Cestone
Sarah Johnson
Redlich
Hoyt David Morgan
Brad Coolidge
Melissa Coolidge
Todd Labarowski
Danny McBride
Jody Hill

CAST

Nicolas Cage
Joe Ransom
Tye Sheridan
Gary
Gary Poulter
Wade, 'G-Daawg'
Ronnie Gene Blevins
Willie-Russell

**Dolby Digital
In Colour**
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Curzon Film World

America, the present. Joe Ransom, prone to extreme violent outbursts, is trying to control his temper. He is head of a team who poison trees on land that needs to be cleared by lumber companies. He agrees to employ a 15-year-old boy, Gary, and his abusive, alcoholic father, Wade. Joe is shot in the shoulder by Willie as revenge for slapping him in a bar. Gary later sees Willie dumping the gun off a bridge and is threatened by him. Gary easily beats him up. Wade and Gary are sacked because the former isn't working hard enough. Wade kills a homeless man for a bottle of wine. Gary later visits Joe, who is fond of him, and succeeds in being reinstated. Joe is confronted in a bar by Willie, but beats him and flees, stopping just short of severely injuring him. He visits a brothel and allows his dog to kill the guard dog there. Joe later warns Wade not to hurt Gary any more. Gary turns up at Joe's house announcing his intention to kill Wade, who has kidnapped Gary's sister to pimp her out to Willie. Joe rescues the girl, who escapes with Gary. As he is about to kill Willie, Joe is shot fatally by Willie's accomplice. Joe survives long enough to shoot both men dead and to see Wade leap from a bridge to his death. Gary takes the dog and starts work with a new tree company headed by one of Joe's friends.

Keeping Rosy

United Kingdom 2013
Director: Steve Reeves
Certificate 15 92m 49s

Reviewed by Sophie Ivan

Adapted from their short film 'Taking Life' by award-winning advertising director Steve Reeves and copywriter Mike Oughton, *Keeping Rosy* boasts some impressively heavyweight crew members for a low-budget British thriller – not least editor Paul Watts (*Under the Skin*), Oscar-winning composer Stephen Warbeck (*Shakespeare In Love*, *Billy Elliot*) and director of photography Roger Pratt (whose numerous credits stretch from *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* all the way back to *High Hopes* and *Brazil* in 1985). With such old hands on deck, the film has an unsurprisingly slick aesthetic but the real jewel in its crown – and in many ways its saving grace – is its star, Maxine Peake.

For an actress whose past roles include Myra Hindley and who is set to play Hamlet in an upcoming gender-reversed production for the Manchester Royal Exchange, the prospect of taking the lead in an indie thriller can hardly have been daunting. Yet Peake's success in holding the viewer's attention almost singlehandedly in this increasingly preposterous potboiler is no mean feat. She even manages to breathe life into her potentially cardboard cut-out character, Charlotte: a workaholic single businesswoman who lives alone in a soullessly pristine City flat (in a new block named, with hollow irony, Elysian Heights), whose ubiquitous gleaming chrome surfaces preclude the need for mirrors.

Having just been shafted at work with the discovery that she is about to be made redundant rather than promoted as she had anticipated, Charlotte returns home to find her cleaner smoking in her coldly sterile living room and reaches breaking point. In the altercation that ensues, Charlotte's day goes from disastrous to nightmarish, with no prospect of a pinch to wake her up. Her character does little to endear herself in the scenes that follow, though the way in which Peake – acting in near-total isolation for a significant proportion of the film – silently registers shock and emotion in her fiercely intense facial expressions



Baby on board: Blake Harrison

magnetically draw us into her plight, no matter how deplorable some of her actions.

The outside world slowly starts to seep into Charlotte's private ordeal with the introduction of two rather far-fetched supporting characters in the shape of Charlotte's overly-credulous estranged sister (very much the uninhibited yang to Charlotte's buttoned-up yin), who crosses the country at the drop of a hat to help her sister look after a stranger's baby with barely a raised eyebrow, and Roger, a grinningly ruthless security guard (played with relish by Blake Harrison of *The Inbetweeners*) whose determination to blackmail Charlotte seems startlingly Machiavellian, based as it is on a chance discovery.

The spiralling absurdity of the narrative, which manages to leapfrog over some significant potholes (including a complete disregard for the realities of UK child custody law), is as much a reason to keep watching as not. Those who stay the course should be pleasantly surprised by how the film holds its nerve, with a shock ending that smartly avoids throwing the baby out with the bathwater. 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Richard Holmes
Isabelle Georgeaux
Written by
Mike Oughton
Steve Reeves
Director of Photography
Roger Pratt
Film Editors
Scott Crane

Paul Watts
Production Designer
Alex Marden
Music by/Music Orchestrated by
Stephen Warbeck
Production Sound Mixer
Andrew Hewitson
Costume Designer
Roger K. Burton

@Redemption Films Limited
Production Companies
Pont Neuf Productions and Big Rich Films present
Executive Producer
Patrick Healy

CAST

Maxine Peake
Charlotte
Blake Harrison
Roger
Christine Bottomley
Sarah
Sam Hoare
Tom
Elisa Lasowski
Maya

Tori Hart
Jen
Yvonne Wandera
Emma
Dominic Geraghty
Simon
Chloe Whittock
Chloe
Ann Penfold
Agnes
Col Farrell

Agnes' husband
Siena Spiro
Stacey

In Colour
[2.35:1]
Distributor
Redemption Films

London, the present. On the day that dedicated businesswoman Charlotte discovers she is to be made redundant, she loses her temper in an argument with her cleaner, striking and accidentally killing her. She dumps the body in the river to cover her tracks but is then shocked to discover the cleaner's baby in the back seat of her car. Reluctantly, she resolves to take care of the baby, whom she christens 'Rosy' – though with little experience of child-rearing, she calls on her estranged sister Sarah to help her.

When she realises that her fight with her cleaner must have been caught on the security cameras of her block of flats, Charlotte tries to steal the footage but in doing so arouses the suspicion of Roger, the security

guard who monitors the building. Eager to get a slice of Charlotte's hefty redundancy pay-off in exchange for his silence, Roger ingratiates himself with Charlotte through Sarah, with whom he has a one-night stand.

When Roger realises Charlotte has burned down the security hut that contains the incriminating hard disc footage, and is planning to flee back to her hometown with Sarah, Roger violently confronts them, knocking Sarah unconscious. Tussling over a memory stick that contains the only remaining copy of the footage of Charlotte's crime, Charlotte – taking a final look at Rosy through her window – hurls both herself and Roger to their deaths over the balcony of her flat. When the police arrive at the scene Sarah claims custody of Rosy.

Love Me till Monday

United Kingdom 2013
Director: Justin Hardy
Certificate 15 93m 11s

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

There's a sweet vulnerable innocence about Georgia Maguire, who plays Becky, the lovelorn heroine of *Love Me Till Monday*, and the same could be said of the film itself, which was nominated for a Best Newcomer Award at the 2013 BFI London Film Festival. The big-screen debut of TV director Justin Hardy, it was shot over two weeks in the summer of 2012 for a budget of around £25,000. If its deliberately prosaic setting of Reading recalls Ricky Gervais's *Cemetery Junction*, the film's unpretentious, low-key realism, largely improvised dialogue and evident affection for its emotionally flailing twentysomethings aligns it more closely with Alex Barrett's *Life Just Is*. But where Barrett's film gave broadly equal attention to half a dozen characters, *Monday* homes in on Becky and her wistful quest for love and happiness.

Hardy, along with his "co-writers and co-creators", producers Muireann Price and Jack Fishburn, set out to create "a sense of reality and spontaneity", reflecting what they see as the circumscribed existence of today's generation of graduates, obliged to settle for less than they might have hoped for. The film's particularly acute in its depiction of the quotidian routine of office life: the boredom and insecurity, the gossip and petty feuds, and the raucous boozy release of Friday nights in the local bar or club. Becky's still-living-with-mum homelife is well sketched too; in the absence of her mother (off somewhere with current boyfriend), she looks after her pre-teen brother Olly, cooks, jogs and hoovers. Olly, while fixated on his Xbox, is still capable of a touching display of affection; finding Becky in tears after her latest romantic episode has misfired, both he and his tubby friend from next door sweetly envelop her in a comforting hug.

Where *Monday* goes slightly askew is in its touches of whimsy, such as the object of Becky's secret desires (Royce Pierreson) being known simply as 'HIM', which makes for some awkwardness in dialogue, and Becky obsessively counting the goldfish in her pond or carrying out witchcraft rituals in the garden ("On a Friday evening at full moon... carve your 



Summer of love: Georgia Maguire

lover's name into an onion"). Elements like these feel self-consciously dragged in, as if the filmmakers had momentarily wondered if their realist mode needed spicing up a little. It didn't. Becky's brief, ill-fated affair with her prissy boss Steve (a selflessly creepy performance from Tim Plester) hits just the right note of mutual embarrassment, as does the moment when office junior Scotty is egged on by his co-workers into performing a drunken public striptease.

The film's production values belie its minuscule budget. Matt Wicks's widescreen photography makes Reading look like a surprisingly sunny and attractive place to live, and Will Cookson contributes a lilting score. If *Monday* ultimately feels a touch tentative and inconsequential, that only reflects the disposition of its heroine. The same production team have just completed their follow-up feature, *The Greatest Englishman*, again with Georgia Maguire in the cast. On the strength of their current offering, the omens are promising. **B**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Jack Fishburn
Muireann Price
Written and Created by
Justin Hardy
Muireann Price
Jack Fishburn
Director of Photography
Matt Wicks
Editor
Damian Knight
Production Designer
Jo Manser
Featuring the Music of
Will Cookson
Sound Recordist
Justin Smith
Costume Designer
Heidi Miller

© Justin Hardy
Executive

Producers
Paula Prynn
Mark Sandell
Manuela Noble
Laina Cohn

CAST
Georgia Maguire
Becky Williams
Tim Plester
Steve
Royce Pierreson
HIM
Sarah-Jayne Butler
Vicki
Sarah Barratt
Carly
Christopher Leveaux
Scotty
Bennett Warden
Barry
Ludo Hardy
Ollie
Tyler Gayle

Tyler Charlotte Gallagher
Jen Anneli Page
Tina

In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Verve Pictures

Present-day Reading. Becky Williams works at DGTL Marketing with her colleagues Barry, Carly, Vicki, Scotty and HIM (the object of her secret affections). Becky's boss, Steve, calls her in for an assessment: she gains qualified approval and is told her job's safe for at least three months. Barry, though, is fired. At home Becky looks after her 11-year-old brother Ollie while her mother Diane is away with her boyfriend Terry. The group give Barry a lively send-off. Becky flirts with HIM, who seems to be in a relationship with Carly, and tries to get him back to her place, but the others pile into the taxi with them and stay over. HIM teases Becky over her cherished 'Book of English Magic,' and they almost kiss.

HIM leaves on a trip. While shopping, Becky meets Steve, who takes her to his favourite toyshop to choose a gift for Ollie. Later, they take Ollie to a museum together. Steve invites Becky to his flat for dinner and they sleep together but at work he reverts to boss mode and Becky breaks up with him. HIM returns; he and Becky go for a drink and then back to her place but they're inhibited by the lack of a condom and he leaves the next morning. Becky weeps and later burns her book of magic. With the return of Diane, who's got engaged to Terry, Becky heads off on holiday. On the coach she sits next to an attractive young man. They exchange glances.

Maleficent

USA 2014
Director: Robert Stromberg
Certificate PG 97m 19s

Reviewed by Adam Nayman

This convoluted revision of Charles Perrault's fairy tale veers from slapstick to spectacle to sentimentality without adding anything substantive apart from the ego of Angelina Jolie, who tries to have it both ways here. As the title character – herself a revisionist addition to the Sleeping Beauty story, dating from Disney's 1959 animated adaptation – Jolie has Bette Davis eyes and a bruised heart of gold. As the narration asserts, she is "hero and villain" in the same long, bodaciously cloaked body.

That might sound like complexity but it's just hedging. *Maleficent* is a rip-off of *Wicked* in which a great harridan of popular fiction is recast as a misunderstood monster. The character is given excellent motivations for cursing a newborn baby: she's the daughter of a man who wronged her when they were teenagers (he a human lad, she a smitten sprite); after drugging his "true love" and clipping off her leathery wings (a symbolic act of rape that's rather tough to watch), the bad boy returned home to assume the throne. Consequently, Maleficent's malevolence, once so deliciously unmotivated, is pathologised as the fury of a woman scorned, which ostensibly provides a feminist subtext yet also defines this omnipotent earth-goddess entirely by the actions of a man. **B**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Joe Roth
Screenplay
Linda Woolverton
Based on Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* [1959] and *La Belle au bois dormant* written by Charles Perrault
Inspired by the original Disney *Sleeping Beauty* character
Director of Photography
Dean Semler
Film Editors
Chris Lebenzon
Richard Pearson
Production Designers
Dylan Cole
Garry Freeman
Special acknowledgement to legendary Disney animator Marc Davis for his contributions
Music
James Newton Howard
Sound Designer
Tim Nielsen
Costume Designers
Anna B. Sheppard

Maleficent Costume:
Jane Clive
Digital Visual Effects/Character Animation
MPC
Special Visual Effects/Character Animation
Digital Domain

©Disney Enterprises, Inc.
Production Companies
A Roth Films production
Filmed with the support of the British Film Commission and the UK Government's Film Tax Relief
With the participation of the Province of British Columbia Production Services Tax Credit
Executive Producers
Michael Vieira
Matt Smith
Don Hahn
Angelina Jolie
Palak Patel
Sarah Bradshaw

CAST

Angelina Jolie
Maleficent
Sharlto Copley
Stefan
Elle Fanning
Aurora
Sam Riley
Diaval
Imelda Staunton
Knotgrass
Juno Temple
Thistlewit
Lesley Manville
Flittle
Brenton Thwaites
Prince Philip
Kenneth Cranham
King Henry

Dolby Digital In Colour Prints by DeLuxe
[2.35:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

IMAX prints
98m 25s

Distributor
Buena Vista International (UK)

Powerful winged fairy Maleficent falls in love with teenager Stefan. Years later, he drugs Maleficent and removes her wings as a trophy. Impressed, the king makes Stefan his heir. Humiliated and heartbroken, Maleficent later curses Stefan's newborn daughter Aurora that when she is 16 she will fall into a sleep until woken by true love's kiss. Stefan sends Aurora to live in the woods with three fairy godmothers; Maleficent spies on and becomes protective of her; when Aurora reaches adolescence, they become close. After Aurora pricks her finger, Maleficent's kiss wakes her. She regains her wings and defeats Stefan in a violent battle.

A Million Ways to Die in the West

USA 2014, Director: Seth MacFarlane
Certificate 15 115m 59s

Reviewed by Adam Nayman

"Hate can move mountains," says Albert Stark (Seth MacFarlane) midway through *A Million Ways to Die in the West*. If that's true, then those viewers who don't find themselves on the precise wavelength of this cowpoke pastiche should be able to relocate the Andes to Timbuktu just by reflecting on the experience of watching it.

Give co-writer/director/star MacFarlane credit for making exactly the movie he wanted to make, which is to say a live-action companion piece to his animated television programmes *Family Guy* and *American Dad*. Like these, *A Million Ways to Die in the West* is a loose genre exercise filled with verbal and visual non-sequiturs. The difference, besides the fact that the cartoon medium is better suited to its creator's brand of absurdism, is that the auteur's actual physical presence onscreen is a dead zone; while gifted as a voiceover performer, MacFarlane simply cannot act, and while neither verisimilitude nor charisma matters all that much in a movie that features countless gory deaths and a five-minute sequence built around diarrhoea discharge, it's gruelling when the story's ostensible hero keeps sucking the life out of his scenes.

The Monument Valley setting and bare-bones oater plotline – small-town coward sucks it up, learns to shoot and takes down a vicious gunslinger (Liam Neeson) – suggest that MacFarlane's inspiration here was *Blazing Saddles*, but what *A Million Ways To Die in the West* really recalls is the Woody Allen of *Love and Death* and *Sleeper* – films whose humour was predicated on the incongruity of seeing a contemporary culture hero reacting against stylised versions of the historical past and distant future. But Allen's characters were funny because they were the only ones in on the anachronism, whereas MacFarlane's Albert Stark is merely the crankiest of this movie's many men out of time. In the absence of even a little bit of conceptual rigour (or even basic technical moviemaking competence), MacFarlane's glib self-conscious shtick rings even more hollow than usual, and he drags a lot of famous co-stars and guest stars down with him (surely, Charlize



Fail rider: Charlize Theron, Seth MacFarlane



"Last Exit remains our first port of call for all subtly movie-centric gear." EMPIRE

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Theron, a little alt-comedy credibility can't be worth having to make goo-goo eyes at Seth MacFarlane for nearly two hours).

It's not just a smugly complacent but actually quite an ugly film: its racist gags and sexist characterisations (Theron as a bad girl who throws herself at Albert; Amanda Seyfried as a hateful gold-digger) are the work of a comedian whose reputation for daring, post-P.C. shock tactics serves only his media profile rather than any truly subversive point of view. The basically funny idea at the core of the script – that the American Old West, so widely romanticised in film, literature and television, would have actually been a really horrible place to live – bespeaks a misanthropy that isn't balanced by any sort of underlying fondness or even comic empathy (as it was even in *Blazing Saddles*, which sympathised with its black sheriff's desire to do right by the white constituents who hated his guts). In one of the several laboured running gags that (barely) serve to hold the story together, Albert and Theron's similarly miserable Anna speculate that the reason nobody ever smiles in photographs of their era is that there's nothing in their lives to inspire even a faked, transient expression of happiness. It also explains why nobody in their right minds would laugh at this movie. ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Scott Stuber
Seth MacFarlane
Jason Clark
Written by
Alec Sulkin
Seth MacFarlane
Wellesley Wild
Director of Photography
Michael Barrett
Editor
Jeff Freeman
Production Designer
Stephen Lineveaver
Music
Joel McNeely
Production Sound Mixer
David Brownlow
Costume Designer
Cindy Evans

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II Distribution
Company LP
Production Companies
Universal Pictures and MRC present a Fuzzy Door,

Bluegrass Films production
A film by Seth MacFarlane
Executive Producers
Alec Sulkin
Wellesley Wild
Film Extracts
Back to the Future Part III (1990)

CAST

Seth MacFarlane
Albert Stark
Charlize Theron
Anna
Amanda Seyfried
Louise
Giovanni Ribisi
Edward
Neil Patrick Harris
Foy
Sarah Silverman
Ruth
Liam Neeson
Climch Leatherwood
Christopher Hagen
George Stark
Wes Studi
Cochise

Dolby Digital/ Datasat In Colour [2.35:1]
Distributor
Universal Pictures International
UK & Eire

Arizona, 1882. Sheep farmer Albert Stark is miserable living in his one-horse town, and when his girlfriend Louise dumps him, he contemplates suicide. He's cheered by the arrival of Anna, an attractive and friendly woman who, unbeknownst to Albert, is really the girlfriend of notorious bandit and gunfighter Clinch Leatherwood, who is planning on following her to town after stashing some stolen gold. Albert and Anna become friends and she teaches him to be a gunslinger in preparation for a duel with Louise's mustachioed new boyfriend; when Clinch shows up, Albert flees and drinks a hallucinogenic potion with a Native American tribe. He returns to save Anna from Clinch, which he accomplishes with a poison-tipped bullet. Albert and Anna go off together to raise sheep on the frontier.

Mood Indigo

Director: Michel Gondry
Certificate 12A 94m 25s



Heads in the clouds: Audrey Tautou, Romain Duris

Reviewed by Ginette Vincendeau

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

The adaptation of a cult novel (Boris Vian's *L'Écume des jours*/ *Froth on the Daydream*) by cult filmmaker Michel Gondry, *Mood Indigo* comes with particularly high expectations, which, despite or perhaps because of its blockbuster budget and stellar cast, it doesn't quite live up to.

Mood Indigo is relatively faithful to Vian's 1947 book, a unique mixture of doomed love story, tribute to jazz and critique of Existentialism, couched in a highly inventive style. The wealthy young Colin (Romain Duris) is surrounded by a tight group of friends: his cook Nicolas (Omar Sy) and the latter's lover Isis (Charlotte Le Bon), Chick (Gad Elmaleh) and his girlfriend Alise (Aïssa Maïga). At a party, Colin falls in love with Chloé (Audrey Tautou), whose name echoes a Duke

Ellington number, but no sooner are they married than she is diagnosed with a water lily growing inside her lung. Colin's desperate efforts to save her rapidly deplete his fortune and he starts working at more and more absurd and alienating jobs, such as lying naked on the earth to keep it warm in order to make guns grow – but to no avail. Chloé dies. Meanwhile Chick's infatuation with star philosopher Jean-Sol Partre (Philippe Torreton) – an obvious pun on Jean-Paul Sartre – ends in his own physical and mental ruin, as a result of which Alise kills Partre by removing his heart. The film ends on Chloé's pauper's funeral and Colin's potential suicide by drowning. However outré this chain of events may seem, no summary can give a full sense of the fantastical world of this novel, widely reputed impossible to adapt, although there have been two previous attempts on film and an

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Luc Bossi
Screenplay
Michel Gondry
Luc Bossi
Based on the novel *Froth on the Daydream* by Boris Vian
Director of Photography
Christophe Beaucarne
Editor

Marie-Charlotte Moreau
Production Designer
Stéphane Rozenbaum
Original Music
Etienne Charray
Sound
Guillaume Le Bras
Costume Designer
Florence Fontaine

Production Companies
A Brio Films,

StudioCanal, France
2 Cinéma, Herodiade,
Scope co-production
With the participation of Canal+, Ciné+

Cast

Romain Duris
Colin
Audrey Tautou
Chloé
Gad Elmaleh
Chick

Omar Sy
Nicolas
Aïssa Maïga
Alise
Charlotte Le Bon
Isis
Sacha Bourdo
Mouse
Philippe Torreton
Jean-Sol Partre
Vincent Rottiers
priest
Laurent Lafitte
company director

Natacha Regnier
remedy seller
Zinedine Soualem
old man in the gun factory
Alain Chabat
Jules Gouffé

In Colour and Black and White [1.85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor

Studiocanal Limited
French theatrical title
L'Écume des jours

Paris. Colin, a well-off young man, lives with his cook Nicolas in a large house filled with curious objects, such as a 'pianocktail', and a resident semi-human mouse. He receives frequent visits from his close friend Chick, a fan of the philosopher Jean-Sol Partre, and Chick's girlfriend Alise. Nicolas's girlfriend Isis gives a party at which Colin falls in love with Chloé. Deliriously happy, they marry, but Chloé becomes ill on their honeymoon. A doctor diagnoses a water lily growing in her lung. Desperate to cure her, Colin tries all sorts of treatments, including sending her to the mountains and

covering her in flowers. All the while his home literally shrinks around them. Paying for Chloé's treatment, as well as giving money to Chick to buy Partre's books, ruins him. He has to sack Nicolas and work, unsuccessfully, at several bizarre jobs. The last one is as a predictor of bad news, including that of Chloé's forthcoming death. He makes love to Alise who later kills Partre, while Chick is shot by the police. Because Colin has no money, the priest refuses a proper burial for Chloé. Colin, Nicolas and Isis throw her body into a mass grave next to a lake. Colin is last seen drowning.

Mr Morgan's Last Love

Germany/Belgium/France/USA 2013
Director: Sandra Nettelbeck
Certificate 12A 115m 54s

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Mr Morgan's Last Love is a basically amiable but rather murkily plotted movie about an unlikely, unexpected friendship. (Why likely or expected friendships aren't so often thought worthy to be the subjects of small character-based movies is one of the great mysteries of contemporary cinema.) The character of Mr Morgan was French in Françoise Dorner's source novel, *La Douceur Assassine*, a title which suggests something more sexy and sinister than anything that occurs in Sandra Nettelbeck's wishy-washy film. As played by Michael Caine, Mr Morgan is an American with a wandering accent who is drawn back from oblivion by taking line-dancing classes from Clémence Poésy's cheery chipmunk Pauline. Gillian Anderson and Justin Kirk show up around the halftime marker, at first seeming like the most vile children since *All that Heaven Allows*, though Kirk's face is eventually allowed to soften to something like tenderness. Along these lines, the best that *Mr Morgan* might do is wear down a susceptible viewer to the point of wearily feeling something. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Philipp Kreuzer
Astrid Kahmke
Ulrich Stiehm
Frank Kaminski
Sidney Kimmel
Helge Sasse
Written by
Sandra Nettelbeck
Based on the novel *La Douceur assassine* by Françoise Dorner
Director of Photography
Michael Bertl
Editor
Christoph Strothjohann
Production Design
Stanislas Reydellet
Music
Hans Zimmer
Sound
Henri Morelle
Costume Design
Maira Ramedhan-Levi

©Bavaria Pictures GmbH, Kaminski, Stiehm, Film GmbH, Senator Film Köln GmbH, Scope Pictures SPRL, MMLL GmbH & Co. KG, Eberhard Müller
Filmproduktion, Saxonia Media Filmproduktion GmbH, Bavaria Film GmbH
Production Companies
A Bavaria Pictures, Kaminski, Stiehm, Film and Senator Film Köln co-production with Scope Pictures, MMLL, Eberhard Müller Filmproduktion
In association with Elzévir Films, CinePostproduction, Bavaria Film, Bavaria Fernsehproduktion, Saxonia Media Filmproduktions GmbH and Sidney Kimmel Entertainment With the support of Film- und Medienstiftung NRW, MBB, FFA, DFFF Supported by Tax Shelter of the Belgian Federal Government via SCOPE Invest, French T.R.I.P., Media Programme-i2i Audiovisual of the

European Union
Executive Producers
Jim Tauber
Matt Berenson
Bruce Toll
Matthias Esche
Jan S. Kaiser
Georg Höss

CAST

Michael Caine
Matthew Morgan
Clémence Poésy
Pauline Laubie
Justin Kirk
Miles Morgan
Jane Alexander
Joan Morgan
Michèle Goddet
Madame Dune
Richard Hope
stamp collector
Anne Alvaro
Madame Léry
Gillian Anderson
Karen Morgan

Dolby Digital In Colour [1.85:1] Part-subtitled

Distributor
Arrow Film Distributors Ltd

Paris, the present day. Matthew Morgan, a retired American living abroad, is still grieving the death of his wife some two years ago. Mr. Morgan strikes up an acquaintance with a twentysomething woman named Pauline, and begins attending classes at the dance school where she teaches, confiding his sorrow to her in their private outings. Mr. Morgan attempts suicide with an overdose of sleeping pills. When Mr. Morgan's son, Miles, arrives from the United States, he discovers this mysterious young woman at his father's bedside, and immediately concludes that she is a gold-digger. As Mr. Morgan recovers, old family resentments boil up again. Pauline tries to broker a truce between father and son, and winds up falling for Miles. Mr. Morgan and his son clear the air over lunch together, and by the closing scene, Mr. Morgan has passed. Miles says goodbye to Pauline, but promises to come back to Paris to get her.

Northwest

Denmark 2013
Director: Michael Noer
Certificate 15 90m 36s

Reviewed by Sam Davies

There's more than a trace in Michael Noer's second feature, *Nordvest*, of the Dogme manifesto, formulated nearly 20 years ago by a group of Danish directors. Shot on location in Copenhagen's northwestern district, it uses natural lighting, no post-production effects and no music except where it arises inside the story's frame. The camera is often handheld, the actors non-professional. But it breaks Dogme's rules in two crucial respects: it involves guns and it is a genre film.

Not that its genre has a name as such but consider the plot: Casper (Gustav Dyekjaer Giese) and his younger brother Andy are teenage burglars, forced to sell their loot at knockdown prices to neighbourhood fence Jamal. When the chance to work for another employer comes up, Casper takes it and we follow his promotion from burglar to pimp's driver to drug dealer, knowing all the while that his upward trajectory away from his old haunts and associates is unlikely to end with him living out his dotage in secure domestic bliss.

Noer never departs from the well-worn pattern for this kind of criminal bildungsroman, hitting all the usual beats as Casper seizes his chance, earns his new gang's respect, wields his freshly-fattened wallet and makes new enemies. That's not a weakness per se: as with an old blues song, it's about the interpretation and delivery, the fine touches and nuances. *Nordvest* has this in flashes. Casper's promotion from small-time crook to slightly less small-time crook comes after he successfully steals a shopping list of items for piratical biker gang leader Bjorn, who wants some gigantic flatscreens and a PH Artichoke – a ceiling lamp and a design classic, suggesting that Danish respect for its own modernist interior design heritage extends all the way down into its criminal underworld. Casper finds a house to pinch the light fixture from by scouring photos of interiors on property websites, a detail worthy of Elmore Leonard. There's also a sweetly constructed sequence in which Casper uses his new money to take his mother, young sister and brother to be pampered in a spa.

But *Nordvest* often feels strangely anonymous, as if identifying features and serial numbers had been filed off. Despite its



Pusher: Gustav Dyekjaer Giese

opera. If anyone is up to the task, though, it is surely Michel Gondry, whose music videos, commercials and films are a byword for surreal mise-en-scène.

Gondry's signature visual bricolage is a perfect fit for Vian's magic universe. The filmmaker is a self-confessed fan, and this is evident from the recurrent *mise-en-abyme* scenes that show rows of typewriters whizzing past hundreds of typists on conveyor belts at high speed, copying lines from the book (a scene shot in the spectacular conference room of the French communist party's headquarters in Paris). Gondry proceeds to animate the madcap world of the book in ways that will be familiar to his fans. Thus Colin's 'pianocktail', a piano that converts melodies into cocktails, is reminiscent of the 'paint piano' Gondry devised for Björk. Dozens of visual tricks, the use of colour, the play with animated objects and semi-human animals can be found in his music videos, including Björk's 'Bachelorette' (which also contains a book writing itself); special effects involving incongruous juxtapositions and manipulations of scale abound in *Mood Indigo* as in his previous films, such as *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004).

Gondry stunningly renders the elastic sense of space of *L'Écume des jours*. Colin's surroundings oppressively – and literally – shrink in size as Chloé wastes away, while cheerful colours gradually fade until, in the grim funeral at the end, we are in black and white. Set pieces such as an ice rink sequence, a wedding and Colin and Chloé floating in a white cloud-like pod over Les Halles in central Paris, are all memorable, as is the exuberant party at the beginning where guests dance the 'Biglemoi' (one of Vian's neologisms, roughly translatable as 'look at me') in which their elongated legs have a life of their own.

The film is less successful in other ways. One is historical. The transposition to a vaguely contemporary Paris that is nevertheless steeped in the 1970s (the current building site of Les Halles recalls the infamous 'hole' of that time) deprives the adaptation of the text's original critique of post-war Parisian culture. Vian's parody of Sartre, funny as it is, was a serious attack on engagé Existentialism, to which he opposed a deeply pessimistic individualism. Traces of the writer's anti-clericalism and anti-militarism subsist, as in the priest's refusal to bury Chloé without money, but they are subsumed under the avalanche of special effects. Only the glorious Duke Ellington soundtrack remains as evidence of Vian's cultural leanings (he wrote jazz criticism and played the trumpet). Another problem is the difficulties the film has in translating the romantic tone of the novel. Unsuccessful on its first release, *L'Écume des jours* became a cult (as well as a school textbook) in the 1960s and has remained so ever since, especially with young readers sensitive to its melancholy tale of amour fou. But somehow *Mood Indigo* lacks emotional affect, partly because the actors – mostly in their late thirties – are too old for what is essentially a tale of young people's inability to grow up, but also because of the film's style. Whether the spectator is familiar with the novel or not, both the romanticism of Colin and Chloé's fate and the desperately sombre mood of the overall tale are marginalised by Gondry's wonderful, exuberant visual pyrotechnics. Ⓢ

title, it conveys little sense of place or community: the viewer can infer that Casper's neighbourhood is the rough side of town, and a racial faultline is implied in the stand-off between Jamal's gang and Bjorn's bikers. But little is made of these suggestions, Noer instead brooding on his lead's face. *Nordwest* might have been more accurately titled *Casper*: Giese is in almost every frame and the film is so wholly his story. Its most memorable shot comes in the opening titles: Casper's face is framed against a white wall in a club, looking downwards out of the shot, the lights changing colour in slow washes as techno pulses from the background. With its suggestion of a Warhol screen test, it's the only moment that isn't rigidly naturalistic but also suggests, from the very start, that Noer knows he's really making a portrait of Casper rather than northwest Copenhagen. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Tomas Radoor
René Ezra
Written by Rasmus Heisterberg
Michael Noer
Director of Photography Magnus Nordenhof Jönck
Editor Adam Nielsen
Production Designer Trine Padmo
Sound Designers Kasper Janus
Rasmussen
Rasmus Winther
Jensen

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Production Companies Nordisk Film
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from the Danish
Film Institute
in co-operation
with DR
Produced by Nordisk

Film Production A/S with support
from the Danish
Film Institute
in co-operation with
Filmklubben in DR
Executive Producers
Henrik Zein
Lena Haugaard
Thomas Heinesen

Subtitles

Distributor
Arrow Films

Danish theatrical title
Nordvest

CAST
Gustav Dyekjær
Giese
Casper
Oscar Dyekjær
Giese
Andy
Nicholas
Westwood Kidd
Robin
Roland Møller
Bjorn
Dulfi Al-Jabouri
Jamal
Lene Maria
Christensen
Olivia

In Colour
[1.85:1]

Copenhagen, the present. Teenage brothers Casper and Andy are petty burglars living in the city's northwest. They take their loot to Jamal, a local fence, whose car they borrow to do jobs. Jamal underpays the brothers and his friend Ali picks on Andy, the younger brother. Casper is approached by Bjorn, leader of a biker gang, to steal some specific items. At first he refuses but, frustrated by Jamal, he agrees. Bjorn is impressed by Casper's work and asks him to drive the girls he pimps out from job to job. Casper becomes increasingly involved with Bjorn's gang and their drug dealing. Casper recruits his brother to ferry the drugs around on his scooter. As the brothers progress in Bjorn's gang, tensions rise with Jamal. Casper attempts to embarrass him in an upscale restaurant with his new wealth. Jamal retaliates, shooting up Bjorn's house. Bjorn gives Casper a gun and tells him the feud must be finished. Casper tracks Jamal down but cannot bring himself to shoot. Andy takes the gun and kills Jamal. Casper decides they need to lie low and prepares to leave the city. But Bjorn turns on Casper when he realises he is fleeing and Andy reveals that he was in fact the shooter. Casper escapes but runs into Jamal's gang. They chase him into a cemetery; the final shot is of a gun being fired at Casper offscreen.

The Nut Job

Republic of Korea/Canada/USA 2013
Director: Peter Lepeniotis
Certificate U 85m 55s

Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

The Nut Job has a typical children's-movie lesson about the importance of teamwork. Surly Squirrel (Will Arnett) refuses to be part of his town park's animal community, stealing nuts for himself rather than contributing to the communal winter food store. Exiled by charlatan leader Raccoon (Liam Neeson), Surly redeems and reinstates himself by reluctantly leading an expedition to steal nuts from hackneyed Italian mob types who plan to substitute them for a bank vault's contents in a poorly conceived heist. Repeatedly farting groundhogs are representative of the wan gags on offer here, while the story is confined, presumably for budgetary reasons, to a few select areas and faces are generic ovoid blobs with varying colourings or a few haphazard sharp planes. (The lack of detail and variation makes it easier to see exactly where the hundreds of millions spent on Pixar and Dreamworks features go.) Publicity material states the film is set in the 1950s, a context not conveyed by its unconvincing Anytown (or rather 'Oakton'), US, setting.

The film's production history is slightly more interesting. The majority of the financing came from South Korea (including its Ministry of Culture), with much of the balance raised in Canada. It's the first Asian animated film to open on more than 3,000 screens in North America, a point of professed "pride" stressed in interviews by Ha Hoe-jin, CEO of South Korean animation company RedRover, who believes *The Nut Job* is "laying the foundation for developing overseas markets based on Korean culture" – a grand claim for such a calculatedly generic work. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Wookyoung Jung
Graham Moloy
Written by Peter Lepeniotis
Lorne Cameron
Story Peter Lepeniotis
Daniel Woo
Edited by Paul Hunter
Art Director Ian Hastings
Original Score Paul Intson
Supervising Sound Editor David Evans
Animation Director Daryl Graham

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Production Companies Redrover Co., Ltd, ToonBox
Entertainment Ltd and Gulfstream
Pictures present
in association
with Ministry of
Culture, Sports
and Tourism of the
Republic of Korea,
Korean Small and
Medium Business
Administration,

Korea Venture
Investment
Corporation, KOCCA
(Korea Creative
Content Agency), KT
Capital Corporation,
KT Corporation,
BOKWANG
Investment Corp.,
Hanwha Investment
Corp., ISU Venture
Capital Co., Ltd, CJ
Venture Investment,
Company K Partners
Limited, Woori
Investment Co., Ltd,
YG Entertainment,
Korea Exim
Bank, Industrial
Bank of Korea
Executive Producers
Daniel Woo
Hong Kim
Jay Ahn
Mike Karz
William Bindley
Hoejin Ha
Tom Yoon
Hyungkon Kim

Grayson
Stephen Lang
King
Maya Rudolph
Precious
Liam Neeson
Raccoon
Katherine Heigl
Andie
Jeff Dunham
Mole
Gabriel Iglesias
Jimmy
Sarah Gadon
Lana
James Rankin
Fingers
Scott Yaphe
Lucky
Joe Pingue
Johnny
Annick Obonsawin
Jamie

Dolby Digital/
Datasat
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Some screenings
presented in 3D

Distributor
Warner Bros
Distributors (UK)

VOICE CAST
Will Arnett
Surly
Brendan Fraser

Oakton, US, the 1950s. Selfish Surly Squirrel is exiled from the town park. He redeems himself by leading an expedition for food that inadvertently foils a bank robbery.

A Perfect Plan

France/Belgium/United Kingdom 2012
Director: Pascal Chaumeil
Certificate 15 105m 7s

Reviewed by Ginette Vincendeau

The unfortunately named *A Perfect Plan*, like its heroine's scheme, goes awry almost from the start, despite director Pascal Chaumeil's credentials as the maker of the international hit *Heartbreaker* (2010), A-list stars and some stunning colour photography. The first, and major, hurdle is a plot so improbable that it smacks of scriptwriting desperation. Even assuming we believe in the premise that beautiful Isabelle (Diane Kruger) refuses to marry caring, handsome Pierre (Robert Plagnol), the man she loves and has lived with for ten years, because of a 'curse' on first marriages in her family, things go from bad to worse. Isabelle organises a marriage of convenience in Denmark, where it is apparently possible to get a divorce in 15 minutes, but when the groom fails to turn up she hits upon the hapless Jean-Yves (Dany Boon), a nerdy travel-guide writer. She follows him to Kenya where the humour turns exotic and borderline racist (quaint tribal wedding ceremony, horribly weird food). Having tricked Jean-Yves into marriage, Isabelle has to get him to divorce her, resorting to a series of gags that go from the unbelievable to the tasteless, in particular in later scenes set in Moscow.

The second problem with the film is the decision to tell the story through flashbacks. *A Perfect Plan* unfolds as told by members of Isabelle's family at a Christmas gathering in order to cheer up a weepy woman who has just been dumped by her boyfriend (one more unfunny joke), a laboured device that slows down the film and inhibits identification with its two central characters. This, compounded with ill-fitting casting, explains why this film doesn't work when Chaumeil's previous film did. *Heartbreaker* also featured an outlandish plot, revolving around a young man whose job was to break up 'inappropriate' couples until of course, he fell in love with the woman in one of his assignments. But *Heartbreaker's* more punchy narration and the chemistry of the central couple played by Romain Duris and Vanessa Paradis worked sufficiently to paper over the cracks in the story. *A Perfect Plan* stars France's top comic star Dany Boon and the beautiful and talented Diane Kruger, yet it fails to ignite any passion between the two (even as,



Marriage plot: Diane Kruger

naturally, they eventually fall for each other).

The third issue is that there is something faintly unpleasant about the film's deployment of Dany Boon's goofy persona. Boon's popular identity is normally portrayed positively in his films, either as regional specificity (in his 2008 mega-hit *Welcome to the Sticks*) or as an endearing everyman quality in successful comedies such as *My Best Friend* (2006), against middle-class Daniel Auteuil, or rom-coms like *On the Other Side of the Bed* (2008, with Sophie Marceau). But *A Perfect Plan* adopts the contemptuous bourgeois viewpoint of Isabelle's family and equates his lack of sophistication simply with stupidity. Having spent two-thirds of the film building up Jean-Yves as a charmless bore, the picture fails to make Isabelle's change of heart credible. **C**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Nicolas Duval
Adassovsky
Yann Zenou
Laurent Zeitoun

Screenplay

Laurent Zeitoun
Yoann Gromb
Based on an original idea by
Philippe Mechelen

Director of Photography

Glynn Speechaert

Editor

Dorian Rigal-Aousou

Art Director

Hervé Gallot

Original Music

Klaus Badelt

Composed by

Klaus Badelt

Sound Recordist

Julien Sicart

Costume Designer

Véronique Périot

©Splendido Quad

Cinema, TF1 Films

Production, Scope

Pictures, Les

Productions du

Ch'Timi, Chaocorp

Distribution,

Yearadawn

Production

Companies

Quad presents a TF1

Films Production,

Scope Pictures,

Les Productions du

Ch'Timi, Chaocorp

Distribution,

Yearadawn

co-production

In association with

Universal Pictures

International France

CAST

Diane Krüger

Isabelle

Dany Boon

Jean-Yves

Alice Pol

Corinne

Robert Plagnol

Pierre

Jonathan Cohen

Patrick

Bernadette

Le Sache

Solange

Étienne Chicot

Edmond

Laure Calamy

Valérie

Malonn Lévana

Louise

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

Icon Film

Distribution

French theatrical title

Un Plan parfait

Paris, the present. Isabelle and Pierre, both dentists, live happily together. Isabelle, however, resists Pierre's insistence they get married in order to have children because of her family 'curse' – namely that all first marriages in the family fail and only second marriages succeed. She decides to make a quick marriage of convenience in Denmark immediately followed by a divorce in order to marry Pierre as second husband. As recounted through flashbacks by members of her family at a Christmas dinner, Isabelle's plan goes off the rails. When her groom does not turn up in Copenhagen, she pursues Jean-Yves, a naive travel-guide writer she met on the plane. She follows him to Kenya where she tricks him into marrying her in a Maasai ceremony. Back in Paris she dumps him and proceeds to marry Pierre, believing her Kenyan marriage certificate to be legally invalid in France; however, thanks to Jean-Yves's brother, it is in fact valid, and now she needs to divorce Jean-Yves in order to marry Pierre. To this end she tracks him down in Moscow, where she behaves despicably in order to provoke a split. When he finally agrees to the divorce after discovering the whole scam, she has however fallen in love with him, at which point he disappears. She leaves Pierre and tracks Jean-Yves down in a church, where they are happily reunited.

Postman Pat The Movie

USA/United Kingdom 2014

Director: Mike Disa

Certificate U 87m 47s

Reviewed by Kate Stables

Pre-school icon Postman Pat's big screen outing has shucked off the tactile stop-motion feel and community-based plotting of the 27-year-old British TV series, and it's a loss whatever your age as a viewer. Director Mike Disa's film features flat, shiny, generic-looking CGI animation in a predictable plot spoofing *Britain's Got Talent* (with 'Simon Cowbell') while Stephen Mangan's warm but dull voice-work as Pat doesn't give it any lift. (You find yourself praying that Paddington Bear isn't similarly traduced in the upcoming *Paddington*.) It's not without adult-friendly humour – Pat relaxes by reading *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and a string of self-aware gags about the *Postman Pat* puppet series and merchandising follows the character's talent-show success. But the odd mix of toddler-friendly sequences (slapstick humour, vehicle chases) and nightmare-inducing elements (that goose-stepping army of grinning robot postmen, a robot Jess the Cat with laser-beam eyes) suggests that the narrative wasn't fully thought through. The 'postie-nostalgia' plot, in which robots replace community-minded humans, may be prescient, however. Amazon already utilise robots in their warehouses and are trialling air-borne delivery options. Brace yourself for the TV adventures of Postman Package-Delivery Drone. **C**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Robert Anich

Written by

Nicole Dubuc

Story

Kim Fuller

Annikka Bluhm

Based upon the

original television

series by Ivor Wood

Editor

Robert David

Sanders

Art Director

Richard Smitheman

Score Composed by

Rupert Gregson-

Williams

Sound Designer

Robert Poole

Director of Animation

Jeffrey Siergry

©RGH Pictures

and Classic Media

Production

Companies

Classic Media in

association with

Timeless Films

presents an RGH

Pictures production

Executive

Producers

Randa S. Ayoubi

David J. Corbett

Eric Ellenbogen

Doug Schwalbe

Ralph Kamp

Sarah Arnott

VOICE CAST

Stephen Mangan

Pat Clifton, 'Postman

Pat' / Patbot

Jim Broadbent

Mr Brown, the CEO

Rupert Grint

Josh

David Tennant

Wilf

Ronan Keating

Ronan/singing

voice of Pat

Susan Duerden

Sara Clifton

Sandra Teles

Julian Clifton

T.J. Ramini

Ben Taylor

Peter Woodward

Edwin Carbunkle

Robin Atkin Downes

Simon Cowbell

Brian George

Ajay Bains

Parminder Nagra

Nisha Bains

Jo Wyatt

Meera Bains

In Colour

[L85:1]

Some screenings

presented in 3D

Distributor

Lionsgate UK

A Promise

France/Belgium 2013

Director: Patrice Leconte

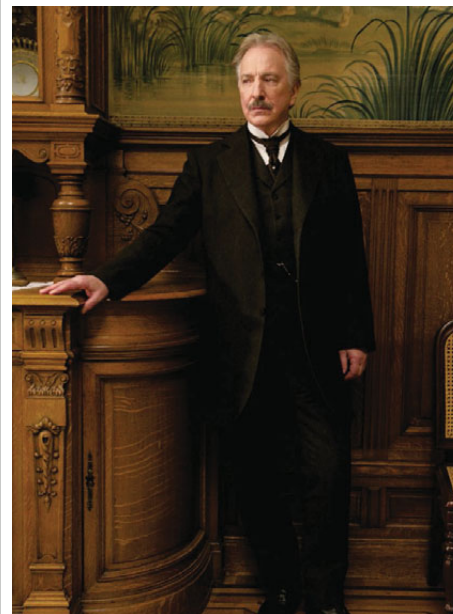
Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

The story of a forbidden love affair whose consummation is painfully protracted by war, the German-set period piece *A Promise* begins in 1912 and ends sometime in the 1920s as a nascent version of the Nazi party is seen, almost incidentally, taking to the streets. The interwar setting is a specialty of German novelist Stefan Zweig, whose final posthumously-published novella, *Journey into the Past*, was adapted into the screenplay for *A Promise* by director Patrice Leconte and his co-scenarist, Jérôme Tonnerre.

Zweig, who committed suicide in 1942 in retreat from the war and exiled from Europe, has lately been experiencing something of a comeback, despite a quite convincing and thorough teardown by Michael Hofmann in the *London Review of Books* in 2010. Even if one agrees with Hofmann's thesis that Zweig is a fifth-rate author, this is no bar to his making first-rate cinema – in many cases, it has proved an asset. Zweig's work has been the source of Ophüls's *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948) and, already this year, Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel* – not an adaptation, but inspired by the wistful farewell to Old Europe's refinement and blithe sophistication contained in Zweig's memoir *The World of Yesterday*.

Images of molten steel in a foundry introduce a tale of bubbling and churning emotions, held barely in check beneath the surface. The insoluble dilemma at the centre of the story is a *ménage à trois* formed by captain of industry Herr Hoffmeister (Alan Rickman), his young wife, Charlotte (Rebecca Hall), and his protégé Friedrich (Richard Madden), her match in age if not in social class.

The performances are credible, especially Hall's, whose swanlike neck is well-accentuated by period costume. But a premise so basic needs something more and the best Leconte can come up with are twitchy camera adjustments that occur seemingly at random. It's unclear what purpose these serve beyond pinching the viewer awake and infusing this lugubrious



Man of steel: Alan Rickman

costume drama with a semblance of self-consciously contemporary vitality. (Look, for contrast, at the effortless dynamism of the late Patrice Chéreau's 2005 period piece *Gabrielle*.) Formally, these little twitches serve much the same purpose as the last-act appearance by the Nazis; it's a feint, a distraction. The Nazi street rally also seems a queasy attempt to imbue banal material with world-historical import. If *A Promise* succeeds unequivocally in any respect, it's in its evocation of Zweigian nostalgic melancholy, the sense of the sweetness of life before the war, epitomised in a scene of an outing by Friedrich, Charlotte and her young son to a city park hazy with sunshine. As shot by Eduardo Serra, this has the aspect of a golden memory polished to a high sheen by habitual revisiting – but little in *A Promise* demands the same loving treatment. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Olivier Delbosc
Marc Missonnier
Screenplay
Jérôme Tonnerre
Patrice Leconte
Based on the novel
by Stefan Zweig
Journey into the Past
Cinematography
Eduardo Serra
Editing
Joëlle Hache
Production Design
Ivan Maussion
Music/Piano
Gabriel Yared
Sound
Paul Lainé
Costume Design
Pascaline Chavanne

©Fidélité Films,
Scope Pictures,
Wild Bunch
Production Companies
Fidélité presents
in association
with Wild Bunch a
co-production with
Scope Pictures
With the
participation of
OCS, Wallonie
A film by Patrice
Leconte

Made possible
through the
support of the
Federal Belgian
Government's
Tax Shelter, via
SCOPE Invest
With the
participation
of Wallonia
Developed with
the financial
participation
of Cofinova
Développement 6
Executive Producer
Christine de Jekel

CAST

Rebecca Hall
Charlotte
Hoffmeister, 'Lotte'
Alan Rickman
Karl Hoffmeister
Richard Madden
Friedrich Zeitz
Toby Murray
Otto Hoffmeister
Maggie Steed
Frau Hermann
Shannon Tarbet
Anna
Jean-Louis Shille
Hans, the butler
Sarah Messens
Magda, the maid

Germany, 1912. Friedrich Zeitz, a brilliant engineering student without family or means, starts work in the offices of Herr Hoffmeister's steel foundry. Friedrich earns the trust of his ailing, aged employer, whom he begins visiting at home. Struck by Herr Hoffmeister's pretty young wife Charlotte, Friedrich offers to tutor the couple's son, Otto. Friedrich becomes a regular visitor at the Hoffmeister's magnificent home, a respite from the soiled garret he occupies at a boarding house, where he is carrying on a perfunctory affair with the cleaning lady. Regular intimacy kindles an unspoken attraction between Friedrich and Charlotte that intensifies when Friedrich is invited to move into the Hoffmeister home to work on a proposed Mexican mining venture. Hoffmeister informs Friedrich he is to go to oversee the Mexican project himself for two years, stunning Charlotte into confessing her love. She vows to wait for Friedrich but the Great War stops transatlantic travel, prolonging the absence to six years. Hoffmeister dies during Friedrich's absence, having revealed his full knowledge of his wife's emotional affair. Friedrich returns to Germany and, after an awkward meeting, he and Charlotte vow never to be separated again.

The Sacrament

USA 2013
Director: Ti West
Certificate: not submitted 95m

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

The set-up of *The Sacrament* mixes the very specific and the very general. The leading characters – video journo Sam (A.J. Bowen) and Jake (Joe Swanberg) and photographer Patrick (Kentucker Audley) – work for the (real) *VICE* organisation, but the location of the outwardly idyllic Eden Parish is vague (it seems to be in Africa) even if its inspiration soon becomes apparent. This is yet another mock-documentary horror, though it modifies the 'found footage' rules by presenting itself as an actual documentary with captions, edits, and an impressive score (by Tyler Bates). For once, we are presented with characters who might be expected to keep the camera running under increasingly stressful circumstances; an added frisson is the heroes' sense that if only they can get out alive, they'll have great material.

Writer-director Ti West (*The House of the Devil*, *The Innkeepers*) abjures the supernatural this time, focusing in on a brand of evil that is closer to home. Seen cold, there's a penny-drop moment which gives the rest of the movie the feeling of an awful prophecy being played out: it is apparent from a shot of soft drink and poison being mixed that Eden Parish is based on Jonestown, the Guyanan compound where the Reverend Jim Jones instituted mass suicide in 1978. This has been dramatised previously in Rene Cardona Jr's exploitative *Guyana: Cult of the Damned* (1979), with Stuart Whitman as 'Reverend James Johnston', and William A. Graham's miniseries *Guyana Tragedy: The Story of Jim Jones* (1980), with Powers Boothe. Though much of the detail of the Eden Parish community and the mass suicide is drawn from accounts of Jones's Peoples Temple, West takes on board similar incidents like the Solar Temple suicides (1994-97) and the Heaven's Gate suicides (1997). Just as Gus Van Sant's *Elephant* (2003) lightly fictionalises the Columbine High School massacre but uses it to represent an epidemic of similar



Gene Jones, AJ Bowen

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Christopher Woodrow
Molly Conners
Eli Roth
Jacob Jaffke
Peter Phok
Written by
Ti West
Director of Photography
Eric Robbins
Edited by
Ti West
Production Designer
Jade Healy

Original Score
Tyler Bates
Sound Mixer
Whitney Ince
Costume Designer
Wendy Moynihan

©Worldview
Entertainment VI LLC
Production Companies
Eli Roth presents
an Arcade Pictures
production
A Worldview

Entertainment & IM
Global presentation
A film by Ti West
Co-produced by
Sanders Productions
Limited & Bolston
Productions Limited
Executive Producers
Stuart Ford
Sarah Johnson
Redlich
Maria Cestone
Hoyt David Morgan
Eric Newman
Ti West

CAST

Joe Swanberg
Jake
A.J. Bowen
Sam
Kentucker Audley
Patrick
Amy Seimetz
Caroline
Gene Jones
Father
Donna Biscoe
Wendy
Kate Lyn Sheil

Sarah Shirley Jones Byrd
Lorraine
Talia Dobbins
Savannah
Kate Forbes
Mindy
Lashaun Clay
Robert
Dale Neal
Andre

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
House Distribution UK

Not submitted
for theatrical
classification
Video certificate: 15
Running time: 95m 1s

Sam and Jake, correspondents for the 'VICE' website, accompany fashion photographer Patrick to Eden Parish, an alternative community outside the US where Caroline, Patrick's former drug addict sister, is living. Sam secures an interview with Father, founder and patriarch of Eden Parish, who is genial

crimes, *The Sacrament* can stand as an account of the bizarre, unsettling modern phenomenon of the self-destructing cult. The leader Father's need to extort money from his followers – a feature of the Solar Temple – cracks the illusion of agrarian self-sufficiency, and it seems to be this failure that precipitates his final solution.

Father's dominance seems complete, with parishioners happy to admit their previously disastrous lives and the salvation they've now found away from them, but it's fragile. The game plan is for ex-junkie Caroline (who isn't as 'clean' as she says) to lure her brother into staying so the cult can bilk their wealthy parents – but the visit is a catalyst for trouble. Just as the reporters are almost convinced of Father's benevolence, a scrawled 'help me' note is passed by a mute child (an 'oh shit' moment). Then, a crowd of not-as-happy-as-they-said members shows up with packed suitcases, desperate for a ride out in the visitors' helicopter. West depicts the subsequent atrocity in unflinching, if tactful detail. Caroline's loving murder of her brother by lethal injection is squirm-making, but the credible array of reluctance, acceptance, forced euthanasia (including babies), agonised death throes and guards using kill-shots to finish off hold-outs makes for a shocking, sobering, hard-to-watch escalation of horrors.

West is good at the slow burn; it's even the name of his company. This is a masterclass in unease turning to tension, even when the outcome is inevitable: he gets chills from fleeting expressions and specialises in details unnoticed by the filmmakers but still caught on camera. The performances (mumblecore/horror regulars Bowen, Swanberg and Amy Seimetz are all held over from *A Horrible Way to Die* and *You're Next*) are excellent, with Seimetz a standout as the happy-yet-tense Caroline, who has channelled her resentments into an even more dangerous path than addiction. Gene Jones is mercurially effective as the folksy, canny, manipulative, seemingly sincere yet monstrous cult leader who snorts cocaine before shooting himself. If he has any religious beliefs, they're not mentioned – in a calmly frightening aside, he describes himself primarily as a businessman. **S**

if evasive. However, next morning, many of the community want to leave. Father institutes a long-planned mass suicide, handing out poison to his followers. Caroline kills Patrick and herself. Sam and Jake try to make it out of Eden Parish as the cult destroys itself.

Smart Ass

Director: Kim Chapiron
Certificate 18 89m 37s

Reviewed by Catherine Wheatley

What to call an escort agency? When one of the characters in Kim Chapiron's energetic sophomore feature *Smart Ass* suggests keeping things simple with "The Whore's Club", his partners rebuff him on the grounds that "it sounds like a feminist group." The exchange captures the tone of a film about prostitution that is less interested in the realities of selling one's body for sex than in using prostitution as a vehicle for cynical humour and a metaphor for big business that doesn't quite come off.

Nerdy Dan (Thomas Blumenthal), Kelly (Alice Isaaz), a scholarship girl who says she's a lesbian, and roguish rich kid Louis (Jean-Baptiste Lafarge) are students at an elite Parisian business school. Partly out of boredom, partly to prove to a point, they create an escort service styled on the school's elite clubs. Their proposition is a simple economic one: the sex appeal of attractive women in badly paid service jobs can be leveraged to confer desirability on awkward Johns who can't get laid otherwise, upping their chances of netting desirable girlfriends or elite club memberships.

The world of *Smart Ass* is louche and venal, as disaffected as the early work of Sofia Coppola. Its leads are young and mostly beautiful (Lafarge and Isaaz are all smouldering sensuality and chiseled cheekbones), its action set to a spangly soundtrack from the likes of Justice and Sébastien Tellier. At parties, the slickly sweaty torsos of alpha males glisten as they whip themselves into a bacchanalian frenzy, chanting along to misogynistic rap while long-limbed women order champagne and wait for the nearest stooge to pay. Certainly, the film lacks the grit of Chapiron's much praised debut *Dogpound*, which was set in a young offenders' institute.

Yet an undertow of ideological critique bubbles beneath the film's shiny surface. The language of business spills into every aspect of these young people's lives. Their horror at the prospect of ageing or being ordinary locates the film alongside Martin Scorsese's *The Wolf of Wall Street*,



Evening class: Alice Isaaz, Jean-Baptiste Lafarge

Baz Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby* and Coppola's *Bling Ring* as being wracked with anxiety about one-percenter envy, even as it attempts to stave off that anxiety through spectacle.

References to US business culture, from KPMG to Starbucks, Tupperware to Zuckerberg, come so thick and fast that *Smart Ass* seems at times to be writing its own American remake. The critique of France's culture of privilege could easily be mapped onto Ivy League frat houses, sports clubs and secret societies. But when the leads appear at a fancy-dress party as French icons of republicanism and socialism (Marianne, Charles de Gaulle and socialist Louis Blanc), one begins to suspect there's something more at stake for Chapiron than merely courting international audiences. Scrawled across a wall in the opening party scene is the phrase "the world is mine". The title of a David Guetta dance track, it's a cynical update on the French idiom "le monde est à nous" – roughly, the world is at our feet. In the move to (American) English, all reference to community is erased in favour of an aggressive, acquisitive individualism. What a damning indictment of contemporary US-French economic relations. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Benjamin Elalouf
Pierre-Ange Le Pogam

Screenplay

Noé Debre
Kim Chapiron

Director of Photography

Crystal Fournier

Editor

Benjamin Weill

Art Director

Christian Vallat

Original Music
Ibrahim Maalouf

Sound Recordist

Arnaud Lavaleix

Costume Designer

Justine Pearce

Production Companies

A Moonshaker
and Stone Angels

production in

co-production with
Wild Bunch and
CN3 Productions

With the participation

of Canal+ and Ciné+

With the support of

Région Île-de-France

In association with

Soficinéma 9

CAST

Thomas Blumenthal

Dan

Alice Isaaz

Kelly

Jean-Baptiste

Lafarge

Louis

Karim Ait M'Hand

Jaffar

Marine Sainsily

Eulalie

Marianne Denicourt

Louis's mother

Bruno Abraham

Kremer

Dan's father

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

Studiocanal Limited

French theatrical title

La Crème de la crème

Paris, the present. Nerdy Dan and Jaffar attend an elite business school that has fraternity-style clubs, non-members of which have fewer opportunities to seduce girls.

Dan and his lesbian friend Kelly speculate on the market forces driving sexual desirability. Kelly pays a girl to go out with Jaffar and increase his stock, impressing popular rich kid Louis, who funds Jaffar's deflowering. Soon, Jaffar is dating beautiful women and being invited to the best parties.

Louis, Dan and Kelly set up an escort network called the Cigar Aficionados' Club. Kelly recruits badly paid attractive women while Louis and Dan line up awkward Johns desperate to improve their sex appeal. As business takes off, the three grow closer

but their own sex lives become complicated: Dan starts dating one of the prostitutes, Eulalie, while sexual tension between them has Louis questioning Kelly's sexuality. He and Dan discover she is from a very poor background. Kelly and Louis argue.

When a disgruntled student informs the university about the club, the trio are summoned to a disciplinary hearing. Eulalie breaks up with Dan, saying he has made her cynical like him. Dan tells Louis his interest in Kelly, like the club, is a way of courting danger.

On the day of the hearing, Kelly unsuccessfully attempts to blackmail the university principal, then argues that the scheme's success proves the trio are model students. With the verdict pending, Louis kisses Kelly passionately.

SuperMensch The Legend of Shep Gordon

USA 2013, Directors: Mike Myers, Beth Aala

Reviewed by Jasper Sharp

Those familiar with Alice Cooper's discography are sure to raise a wry smile at the end of this effusive paean to the man responsible for launching the shock rocker on his unlikely star trajectory: as the closing credits roll, the distinctive opening riff to 'No More Mister Nice Guy' kicks in.

In the documentary *Supermensch*, Shep Gordon, the charismatic rock manager, film producer, restaurateur and friend to the stars, is seldom framed as anything other than one of the good 'uns. "The words 'mensch' and 'Shep' are synonymous," chimes in Michael Douglas at one point; to hammer home the point, on-screen text informs us that "mensch" is Yiddish for "all round good guy".

Mike Myers makes an unexpected detour into documentary in his directorial debut, a surreptitious, low-key return to the limelight after the critical lambasting of his last original comic creation, 2008's *The Love Guru*. Not generally known for subtlety, Myers here makes for a surprisingly subdued onscreen presence: he's almost anonymous among the hordes of talking-head testimonials from other celebrities who have had the fortune of coming into Gordon's orbit over the years, including Sylvester Stallone, Robert De Niro and Willie Nelson.

"Shep Gordon is the nicest person I've ever met, hands down," gushes Myers-as-interviewee, dispelling any illusion of objectivity in an instant. Rarely does Myers insinuate there might be a less palatable aspect to this loveable rogue, a close friend and confidante since they met while brokering Cooper's cameo for *Wayne's World* (1992). Nevertheless, some might raise eyebrows at revelations that Gordon sported a T-shirt emblazoned with the legend "No Head No Backstage Pass" during the relentless drink-and-drug-fuelled touring regimes of the early years, recounted with wide-eyed admiration by Douglas. After Gordon outlines his early duties as a rock manager ("The three most important things a manager does is, one, get the money, two, always remember to get the money and three, never forget to always remember to get the money"), he also touches upon the importance of vetting all girls in the backstage area to make sure they were of age, "otherwise you could get in a whole load



The fame game: Shep Gordon (left)

of trouble", after which an off-frame Myers laughingly reminds him "and because it's wrong!" There are other occasional slips of the halo too, like the almost throwaway mention that Gordon's name was redacted from Luther Vandross's autobiography after the singer was dropped from his management.

While *Supermensch's* form is more suited to the more intimate dimensions of the small screen, the pace is sufficiently brisk to encompass the numerous episodes of this life well-lived. Its subject, too, is an undeniably charismatic raconteur, especially in early sections recounting his drug-fuelled binges by various LA poolsides with Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix, and on-the-road escapades with Cooper, whom he still manages.

There's also the narrative of the spiritual journey, as Gordon comes to shun the life of excess that cut down so many of his generation in their prime, moving to Maui in 1974 and embracing Buddhism. From here, he operates an open-door policy, his home a retreat for his worn-out celebrity pals and venue for his lavish gourmet gatherings; his passion for cooking was awakened following his expansion into the restaurant trade.

Throughout his story, Gordon's boundless generosity and irrepressible sense of *joie de vivre* are never really left open to question. However, whether stepping in as surrogate father to the bereaved offspring of a former girlfriend or championing the rights of African-American musicians, celebrity chefs and Tibetan refugees, it seems clear only a part of the picture is being presented. For all the insider backslapping, the end impression one gets from Myers's film is of a life on the sidelines, a man lonely but never alone, and the hollowness and vagidity of an existence at the epicentre of the Hollywood bubble. 📺

Credits and Synopsis

Producer Beth Aala	A&E IndieFilms presents a	Wayne's World (1992)
Directors of Photography Michael Pruitt-Bruun Andreas von Scheele	Nomoneyfunfilms production A film by Mike Myers	In Colour [1.78:1]
Editor Joseph Krings	Executive Producers David McKillop Robert DeBitetto Molly Thompson	Distributor Dogwoof
Sound Fiona McBain	Film Extracts Almost Famous (2000) The Duellists (1977) Roadie (1980) Choose Me (1984) Koyaanisqatsi (1983)	
©Nomoneyfun Films Inc. and A&E Television Networks LLC Production Companies		

A documentary about Shep Gordon, the Hollywood impresario who fell into music management after meeting Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix, then drove the careers of Alice Cooper, Raquel Welch, Teddy Pendergrass, Blondie and many others. Using archive materials and interviews, the film recounts achievements including resurrecting Groucho Marx's career, expanding into the restaurant business in 1975 and then the film world, launching Emeril Lagasse as America's first celebrity chef and dating Sharon Stone. Gordon progresses from 1970s showbiz hedonism to a more spiritual life as a practising Buddhist, longing for a family while regularly playing host to the great and good of Hollywood at his home in Hawaii.

22 Jump Street

USA 2014
Director: Phil Lord, Christopher Miller
Certificate 15 111m 49s

Reviewed by Thirza Wakefield

Were it necessary to subvert the stereotyping of male action heroes, 2012's tongue-in-cheek big-screen remake of the undercover-cops-in-high-school TV show *21 Jump Street* and this sequel, *22 Jump Street*, would be praiseworthy. Created by writer-director partnership and college friends Phil Lord and Chris Miller, the twin-movie comedy franchise depicts two undercover cops, first posing as high-schoolers then as college students. Channing Tatum – good-looking, athletic, a dancer – has no romantic interaction with women in either movie while the conventionally less attractive Jonah Hill has successful sexual encounters with a beautiful girl in each. This switch initially gives the impression that one is watching something original, enlightened; an action-comedy with heft. But, like several of the new film's scripted jokes (Jenko's anti-homophobia crusade; Schmidt's deplorable positive racism), it's no more than novelty rhetoric. This is slow-pitch softball; the film isn't really *saying* anything. It's just another bromance, throwaway as they come.

A bungled undercover operation into the illegal animal trade lands partners Jenko (Tatum) and Schmidt (Hill) back at the student-narcotics division on Jump Street. At its new, improved premises, Captain Dickson (Ice Cube) is heading an investigation into a new compound study drug called WHYPHY, which has killed a female student. Their mission, in the words of deadpan Deputy Chief Hardy (Nick Offerman) is to "do the same thing as last time": enrol as students, reprising their roles as (improbable) brothers Brad and Doug McQuaid, and identify the supplier before circulation spreads statewide.

The *déjà vu* is self-conscious – a deliberate attempt to mimic exactly the kind of second-rate sequel, with distended budget and recycled



Law students: Jonah Hill, Channing Tatum

witticisms, you might expect to befall a critically and commercially successful Hollywood action title. This self-referentiality is the knowing joke that would justify the movie. And at its best it feels as if it has unlinked arms and beckoned you over to join the pre-game huddle. This sense of transparency and inclusivity has a particular charm, embodied by the extraordinarily likeable, everyman appeal of Tatum and Hill. Sometimes uproariously funny, they have undeniable chemistry; their comic timing and spontaneity shines through the affected untidiness of story.

But the film feels targeted at a specific audience: those who have paid, and will continue to pay, to see the type of sequel it mocks – and having seen it, probably pronounce it inferior. So does playing into the hands of one's potential critics make for an exceptional sequel? Maybe; but not necessarily for good filmmaking. 📺

Credits and Synopsis

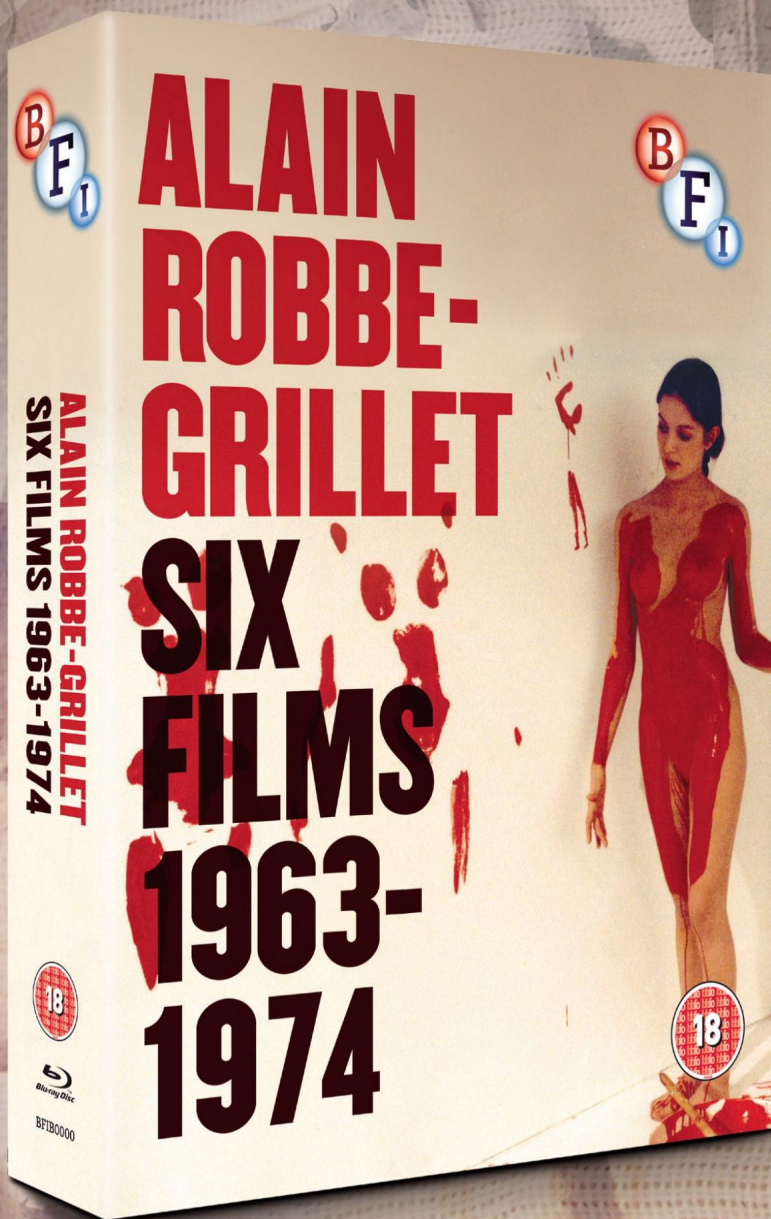
Produced by Neal H. Moritz	Barry Peterson	Companies Columbia Pictures and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures present in association with LStar Capital and MRC an Original Film/Cannell Studios production	Phil Lord Christopher Miller Tania Landau Brian Bell Reid Carolin Ben Waisbren	Jillian Bell Mercedes Ice Cube Captain Dickson Keith Lucas Keith Yang Nick Offerman Deputy Chief Hardy Jimmy Tatro Rooster Caroline Aaron Annie Schmidt Craig Roberts Spencer Marc Evan Jackson Dr Murphy	In Colour [2.35:1]
Edited by David Rennie Keith Brachmann Production Designer Steve Saklad Music Mark Mothersbaugh Sound Mixer David Wyman Costume Designer Leesa Evans	Edited by David Rennie Keith Brachmann Production Designer Steve Saklad Music Mark Mothersbaugh Sound Mixer David Wyman Costume Designer Leesa Evans	A film by Phil Lord & Christopher Miller Québec Production Services Tax Credit Executive Producers Stephen J. Cannell	CAST Jonah Hill Morton Schmidt Channing Tatum Greg Jenko Peter Stormare The Ghost Wyatt Russell Zook Amber Stevens Maya	Dolby Digital/ Datasat/SDDS	Distributor Sony Pictures Releasing
Screenplay Michael Bacall Oren Uziel Rodney Rothman Story Michael Bacall Jonah Hill Based on the television series <i>21 Jump Street</i> created by Patrick Hasburgh, Stephen J. Cannell Director of Photography	Barry Peterson Edited by David Rennie Keith Brachmann Production Designer Steve Saklad Music Mark Mothersbaugh Sound Mixer David Wyman Costume Designer Leesa Evans	Companies Columbia Pictures and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures present in association with LStar Capital and MRC an Original Film/Cannell Studios production	Phil Lord Christopher Miller Tania Landau Brian Bell Reid Carolin Ben Waisbren	Jillian Bell Mercedes Ice Cube Captain Dickson Keith Lucas Keith Yang Nick Offerman Deputy Chief Hardy Jimmy Tatro Rooster Caroline Aaron Annie Schmidt Craig Roberts Spencer Marc Evan Jackson Dr Murphy	In Colour [2.35:1]

US, present day. Following the fatal overdose of college student Cynthia Jackson on a synthetic drug called WHYPHY, Captain Dickson of the *Jump Street* undercover division assigns police officers Jenko and Schmidt – reprising their undercover identities as teenage brothers Brad and Doug McQuaid – to her college to root out the drug's supplier. Frictions mount as Brad befriends jocks Zook and Rooster, who rebuff Schmidt. Schmidt sleeps with art student Maya, who turns out to be Dickson's daughter.

The partners' main clue is a photograph of a drug deal between Jackson and a suspect who is obscured for a distinctive arm tattoo. Brad accepts Zook's invitation to join the football team, before recognising

Zook as the tattooed suspect. When wanted criminal Ghost arrives on campus, the cops realise Zook was buying, not selling. Jenko confesses to Schmidt he's tempted to leave the force and accept a football scholarship. Following a car chase with Ghost, Schmidt returns to routine policing, leaving Jenko behind.

When the wrong man is arrested, the estranged partners reunite and discover that Jackson dealt for her roommate (now Maya's roommate), Mercedes – who is Ghost's daughter. With the help of Maya, Dickson, police back-up and a grenade, they obstruct the father-daughter felons as they attempt to disseminate the drug over Spring Break. The friends reconcile and Jenko rejoins the force.



Released for the first time in the UK, six daring and controversial films from the celebrated novelist, screenwriter and filmmaker.

Blu-ray and DVD box sets includes *The Immortal One*, *Trans-Europ-Express*, *The Man Who Lies*, *Eden and After*, *N. Took the Dice* and *Successive Slidings of Pleasure*, plus introductions, interviews and Tim Lucas commentaries.



Under the Rainbow

France 2012
Director: Agnès Jaoui
Certificate 15 112m 28s

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

After Richard Dawkins's reported recent comments about the potentially "pernicious" effects of fairytales on children, a flock of worthies chorused disapproval. Fairytales, said children's author Lauren Child, are "about figuring out the world". Despite its romantic trappings – it begins with a soft-focus dream sequence in which a young beauty is guided by an angel towards the love of her life – this latest ensemble comedy-romance from Agnès Jaoui tends more towards Dawkins's supposed line: hardwired as they may be, fairytale ways of "working things out" can prove misleading. Beauty doesn't denote virtue, spells don't work, people are both bad and good, and magic has more to do with hard-earned intimacy and reluctant forgiveness than bolts from the blue.

Like Jaoui's previous films as director, *Le Gout des Autres* (2000), *Look at Me* (2004) and *Let's Talk About the Rain* (2008), *Under the Rainbow* is co-written with her husband Jean-Pierre Bacri, and both join the ensemble cast. If their storytelling can be workaday and their addiction to multiple storylines make for overly populous narratives, their great strength is a capacity to refute daffy romanticism whilst resisting cynicism and negativity. *Under the Rainbow* pits the sort of dramatic moments generally granted mystical credibility – the romantic/sexual *coup-de-foudre*, the magical premonition, the decisive separation from a parent or a belief system – against the more modest interventions we might make in our own fates – compromise, acceptance of others' foibles, tolerance of temporary discomfort – and manages to render the latter substantially more appealing.

At its nimblest, it plays engagingly and cleverly with ideas of heroism, responsibility and self-sacrifice. Young composer Sandro (Arthur Dupont) delays giving bad professional news to his friend Julien (Clément Roussier); he's elated when Julien takes it well, then brought down to earth when their plain-speaking mutual friend



Apple of her eye: Agathe Bonitzer, Arthur Dupont

Clémence (Nina Meurisse) accuses him of copping out. Another effective encounter sees Sandro's distant father (Bacri) persuade his son to accept a loan implicitly intended to compensate for years of ineffective parenting. Small stuff, but the day-to-day uses of morality can be small. Big gestures and big feelings, meanwhile, are suspect here, as rich girl Laura (Agathe Bonitzer) discovers to her cost. Directed into two relationships by dizzying first encounters, she fails to see her lovers clearly and ends up alone. Yet she witnesses with frustration the effects of a fondness for grand fairytale narratives in other spheres, as when a challenge to her father's reputation dominates the media while his innocence, once proven, is buried in the back pages.

The fairytale theme can be crudely deployed, as when Laura's icily glamorous, and jealous, mother (Béatrice Rosen) offers her daughter an apple whilst nudging her to get plastic surgery. Elsewhere, heightened, cartoonish dream sequences and montages fall a little flat. And the French title might translate as *The End of the Story* but its makers' resistance to pat endings makes wrapping things up a slightly awkward matter. Still, Dawkins might appreciate the trajectory of pubescent Nina, an initially impassioned believer who throws over Jesus for a pony. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Jean-Philippe Andraca
Christian Bérard
Screenplay
Agnès Jaoui
Jean-Pierre Bacri
Director of Photography
Lubomir Bakchev
Editor
Fabrice Rouaud
Art Director
François Emmanuelli

Original Music

Fernando Fiszbain
Sound Recordist
Jean-Pierre Duret
Costume Designer
Nathalie Raoul

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Hérodiade
Production Companies

Les Films A4 presents
a Les Films A4,
Memento Films
Production, La
Cinéfacture, France
2 Cinéma, Hérodiade
co-production
With the participation
of Canal+, Ciné+,
France Télévisions,
Memento Films
Distribution,
Memento Films
International

In association with
API 4, Cofimage 23

Cast

Agathe Bonitzer
Laura
Arthur Dupont
Sandro
Valérie Crouzet
Eléonore
Jean-Pierre Bacri
Pierre
Dominique Valadié

Jacqueline
Benjamin Biolay
Maxime
Agnès Jaoui
Marianne
Laurent Poitrenaux
Eric
Béatrice Rosen
Fanfan
Didier Sandre
Guillaume
Nina Meurisse
Clémence
Clément Roussier

Julien
Serena Legeais
Nina

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Curzon Film World

French theatrical title
Au bout du conte

Laura, daughter of a wealthy industrialist, complains to her aunt Marianne about the absence of a great love in her life. At his father's funeral, middle-aged driving instructor Pierre meets a fortune-teller who reminds him that the date she once foretold for his death is imminent. Pierre's son Sandro, a young composer, plans to meet his friend, fellow musician and potential girlfriend Clémence, at a lavish party but encounters Laura instead; smitten, they dance but he has to depart at midnight. Pierre chafes against domestic life with his partner Eléonore and her children, while Marianne worries about her daughter Nina's religiosity. Sandro and Laura meet again by chance and get engaged. Their families meet and Marianne arranges driving lessons with Pierre. In woodland near Marianne's house, Laura runs

into neighbour and music industry executive Maxime and develops an instant crush. Maxime is impressed by a concert of Sandro's music; he arranges for a famous musician to perform the piece, telling Sandro to fire his friend Julien from the orchestra. Laura kisses Maxime and informs Sandro; they break up but she discovers Maxime is faithless.

Marianne and her estranged husband, Eric, see a child psychiatrist about Nina. Eric proposes they reconcile. Sandro drops Julien, who takes it well, but Clémence is unimpressed. Laura drunkenly wanders the streets. Marianne, Sandro and Pierre pursue her. Marianne's poor driving improves and Pierre survives the day of his supposed death. With Laura safely home, Sandro leaves and finally gets together with Clémence.

Who Is Dayani Cristal?

United Kingdom/USA/Mexico 2013
Director: Marc Silver
Certificate 12A 84m 58s

Reviewed by Mar Diestro-Dópiro

Despite being hunted down and widely demonised, Latin American economic migrants still make it into the US in their thousands. On the other hand, the actual number of those who die in the attempt to reach the so-called 'promised land' is impossible to calculate, as most if not all won't carry any documentation in case they are apprehended. Hundreds of bodies lie scattered about the vast Arizona desert, especially in an area known as 'the corridor of death'. With US border laws getting tougher than ever and globalisation widening the gap between rich and poor, border casualties are multiplying rapidly. And of the 2000 bodies recovered from the Arizona desert over the last decade, 700 still remain unidentified.

Marc Silver's moving but unsentimental documentary *Who is Dayani Cristal?* takes the unknown identity of one of these economic disappeared as its starting-point. Silver follows the investigation carried out by a group of pathologists, the forensic team at the Tucson Medical Examiner's Office in Arizona, and public servants from consulates on both sides of the border, into the case of Dayani Cristal, who was found 3,500km from his home in Honduras and named after the tattoo that covers his chest.

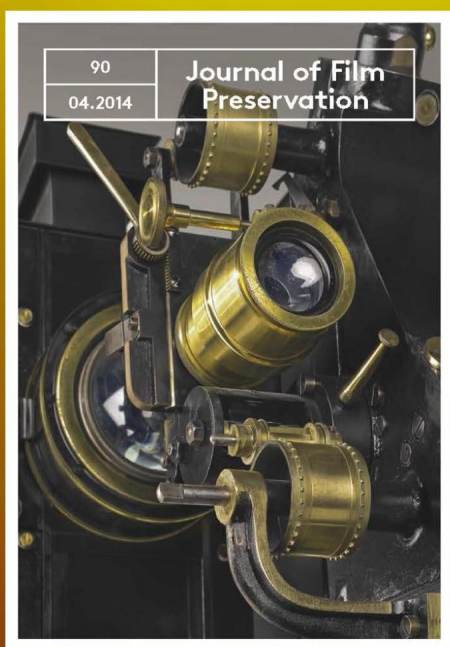
Parallel to the gradual unfolding of the evidence (comprising painstaking laboratory work as well as often shocking statistics on migration) runs a fictionalised element, in which Mexican actor Gael García Bernal re-enacts the most likely route of Dayani's 3,500km journey. Although problematic, it's a technique that admittedly works well on the whole; resurrecting this particular migrant not only gives him an identity and a voice, but creates an emblematic everyman to illustrate precisely why people are forced to take this potentially lethal journey as a last resort.

All the same, a Latin American film that deals with migrants crossing the border to the 'dreamlands' of the US may sound to



Heading north: Gael García Bernal

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some like one too many on this subject. However, in the hands of Silver and to some extent Bernal (producer of the film and a well-known political activist), *Dayani* soon becomes an engaging detective story, its deployment of graphic exposition similar to that in TV series such as *CSI* providing a useful hook for audiences and giving the material a certain zip.

But there's a nagging sense as well that the lush cinematography and the presence of a Hollywood star nudges the film too close to, respectively, poetry and fiction for comfort. Of course, Bernal will be instrumental in bringing the issue to the attention of a wide audience; his well-intentioned eagerness on screen is almost palpable. But his presence is distracting and double-edged, particularly when he pretends to get the words 'Dayani Cristal' tattooed on his chest.

There's a risk in over-identifying Dayani with Bernal, eclipsing the former in the process; most obviously when Dayani-Gael joins the hundreds of migrants from all corners of Latin America travelling atop the train – known as 'La Bestia' (The Beast) – that crosses Mexico towards the border with the US. That said, it's one of the few moments in which the migrants are granted screen time as the real protagonists of this horror story. And seeing Bernal in their midst, eating with them and listening to their testimonies, does accentuate the situation's complexity and the unsurpassable distance between their two worlds, something this film is so willing to tackle if not always successfully. 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Lucas Ochoa Thomas Benski Gael García Bernal	Companies A Pulse Films production in association with BRITDOC and Film4, Impact Partners, Candescent Films, Ford Foundation, Diamond Docs, Silverlining Films, Canana Films, RISE Films, Mundial A film by Gael García Bernal and Marc Silver	Teddy Leifer Marc Silver
Written by Mark Monroe	Executive Producers Dan Cogan Lilly Hartley Jeffrey Tarrant Jess Search	
Directors of Photography Marc Silver Pau Esteve Birba		
Editors Martin Singer James Smith-Rewse		
Music Leonardo Heiblum Jacobo Lieberman		
Sound Designer Vanessa Lorena Tate		
Production @Pulse Films		

A documentary about the identification of a rotting body in the Sonora desert in Arizona, which turns out to be a 29-year-old Honduran economic migrant christened Dayani Cristal. Investigators in Arizona are able to trace his family to a village in Honduras thanks to the tattoo on his chest that reads 'Dayani Cristal', which turns out to be the name of his daughter. Mexican actor Gael García Bernal shadows Cristal's footsteps from Honduras to Arizona, as he set off in an attempt to make money to support his family, comprising his wife, daughter Dayani and two boys, one of whom has been suffering from leukaemia from an early age. His journey was the family's last attempt to raise enough money to cover the cost of their son's treatment. His identity established, Cristal's body is returned to his birthplace, where he is buried in the local cemetery in a ceremony attended by his family, friends and others in the local community.

The Year and the Vineyard

Spain 2012
Director: Jonathan Cenxual Burley
Certificate 15 74m 50s

Reviewed by Kim Newman

The central conceit of Jonathan Cenxual Burley's second feature is a time portal that connects the Spain of 1937 to the present day. That this, like Burley's *El Alma de las Moscas* (*The Soul of Flies*), is an essay in magic realism rather than science fiction is conveyed less by the inexplicability of the phenomenon – which is mapped and probed with something approaching a scientific method by tossing stones into the air and sticking up a ladder that disappears after the manner of the Indian rope trick – than by the peculiar priorities of its main character. A Sicilian antifascist who has joined the Garibaldi Legion and is passionately devoted to the struggle, Andrea Pesce arrives in 2012 and is only curious about what happened in the war because a photograph in a book shows his wife Isabella took his place at the battle of Guadalajara. Only the jittery, gay-seeming young priest is much interested in the time traveller as a miraculous being, and then only because he takes him at first for an angel. What he will do when he gets back to his proper time is left literally up in the air but he seems far more concerned with reuniting with his girl than in, say, using foreknowledge of history to defeat General Franco. The only thing he takes back to the past that might prompt him to change history is the advice "don't kill priests".

One of the neatest jokes of the film is that the sunstruck vineyard Andrea falls into hasn't changed much since the middle ages, let alone 1937. The Salamanca of 2012 still seems like the sort of place "where the postman brought letters announcing the christening of those about to get married".

This must be the only man-out-of-time movie ever made not to have scenes in which the protagonist puzzles over contemporary gadgets or is bemused by the way history has panned out since his own times; the priest is more shocked that his predecessor is now "in Cuba with his Romanian girlfriend" than Andrea is by any changed mores since 1937. Indeed, this is also one of the most benign, least divisive films about the Spanish Civil War ever made. The farmer grumbles about his crushed vine and tries to find someone to compensate him, only to be placated by the suggestion that he sells the vintage bomb to a museum. That unexploded bomb is very like the film's version of the war,



Now you see him: Javier Sáez, Andrea Calabrese

and indeed Andrea himself – in theory, it should be dangerous but no one even considers that it's not an antique and is quite likely to explode.

The vision of Spain here is idyllic, slow-paced and charming; peasants are quirky complainers with no real problems and a schoolteacher has time to yearn over an unattainable girl and tutor the strange visitor in the ways of the world because he doesn't seem to have any pupils. Andrea seems to assume that all the problems of his time have been solved, and never sees anything that convinces him otherwise – though, of course, Spain in 2012 was riven with economic disaster and unrest.

This is a slight fable, a brief movie that feels like a *Twilight Zone* episode taken at an easier pace, with time out for wine, conversation and a long siesta. It has a deal of deadpan charm – in the small cast, only Javier Sáez strains too hard for quirkiness – and is imbued with a certain romantic fatalism that resonates with classical wartime fantasies, but it could do with darker darks for contrast with its general sunniness. 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Jonathan Cenxual Burley	Jonathan Cenxual Burley	El Mailán Films presents	Cast Andrea Calabrese Andrea Pesce, soldier	Luis Cenxual Manolo, peasant in vineyard	Subtitles Distributor Matchbox Films
Written by Jonathan Cenxual Burley	Composer Tim Walters	Executive Producers Jonathan Cenxual Burley	Fede Sánchez Tomas the teacher	Hortensia Lucas Manolo's mother	Spanish theatrical title El año y la viña
Director of Photography Jonathan Cenxual Burley	Sound Flash Johnson	Fede Sánchez Norberto Gutiérrez	Javier Sáez priest	Felix Cenxual grandfather from the war	
Production Company Jonathan Cenxual Burley	Production Company @Jonathan Cenxual Burley	Laura Drewitt Isabella	Laura Drewitt Isabella	In Colour [1.85:1]	
		Jane Burley	Maria Escobar Maria		

1937. Andrea Pesce, an Italian leftist, sets out for Spain to fight on the Republican side in the battle of Guadalajara. He mysteriously falls into a vineyard in Salamanca in 2012, where he falls in with Tomas, a timid schoolteacher, and an eccentric priest who determines that he isn't an angel or a saint.

Andrea encourages Tomas to declare his love

to Maria, a girl he likes. When a bomb from the Spanish Civil War falls in the vineyard, Andrea realises there's a hole in the air that connects the two time periods. With the help of Tomas and the priest, Andrea climbs back through the hole in time to reunite with his wife Isabella, who also fought at Guadalajara with the International Brigades.

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An oddball, screwball romance: Joel McCrea and Veronica Lake in *Sullivan's Travels*

TRAVELLING LIGHT

Preston Sturges takes a gloriously comic swipe at the pretensions and excesses of the movie business

SULLIVAN'S TRAVELS

Preston Sturges; USA 1941; Arrow Academy/Region B Blu-ray; Certificate PG; 90 minutes; 1.37:1; Features: audio commentary by filmmaker Terry Jones, 'Preston Sturges: The Rise and Fall of an American Dreamer' documentary, Kevin Jackson on 'Sullivan's Travels' featurette, 'The Preston Sturges Stock Company', 'Safeguarding Military Information' (a Sturges-scripted propaganda short), theatrical trailer, essay booklet

Reviewed by Kate Stables

Sullivan's Travels, that famous light-and-dark piece of Americana that is, as Gregg Rickman put it, "less a screwball comedy than a doctoral thesis on Hollywood cinema", was conceived in the spring of 1941. Preston Sturges's stock was high after the successful release of *The Lady Eve*, and Hollywood had reached the end of a slew of Depression pictures. Perfectly positioned to bite the hand that fed him, Sturges wrote *Sullivan's Travels*, as he later admitted in his memoirs

(usefully excerpted in this excellent new Arrow release), "to satisfy an urge to tell [fellow comedy directors] that they were getting a little too deep-dish; to leave the preaching to the preachers".

In addition to taking aim at Capra-corn, Sturges had long had Hollywood itself in his sights. Darryl Zanuck had recently (and entirely amiably) passed on developing *Song of Joy*, Sturges's unnervingly self-reflexive 1935 treatment spoofing the troubled production of a Hollywood musical. Even if healthy self-preservation meant that the studio-baiting of *Sullivan's Travels* eventually became the kind of barbed teasing indulged in by a favoured son, Hollywood still represented satirical pickings as ripe as politics had been for *The Great McGinty* the year before.

The film that resulted is a rich, gloriously well-judged comic compendium of every aspect of Hollywood, on screen and off, as Joel McCrea's successful director John Sullivan takes to the hobo life in order to experience the hardship that will let him make amends for his money-spinning but shallow comedies with a socially conscious drama entitled *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* Genres and comic devices jostle and cross-talk as hectically as Sullivan's studio-mandated publicity posse of 'the Eight Stooges',

while the plot speeds on like their Airstream trailer, bouncing from comedy through hobo-jungle pity into chain-gang misery and back.

Filled with audacious tonal shifts (Sturges owns up to "some horrible crimes against juxtaposition"), it's an intriguingly and deliberately uneven movie. Its reviews on release were equally bumpy, *Variety* praising its "unusual and satisfying entertainment", while the *New Yorker* went so far as to dub it "a pretentious number". Even now you can find bloggers doggedly working their way through the AFI Top 100 who are wrong-footed by the refusal of no. 61 to stay reliably comic. Inconsistency is one of the chief joys of *Sullivan's Travels*, however. What other film would first skewer the Popular Front movies of the time (everything from *The Grapes of Wrath* to *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* is fair game) and then unabashedly adopt their pathos, shock and grit for Sullivan's own odyssey?

Poised between the end of the Depression and America's entry into World War II, *Sullivan's Travels* is a transitional movie, not just for Sturges's burgeoning auteurism but for Hollywood too. Janus-faced, it looks back at 30s film culture, from social realism to screwball,

but expresses itself with a formal irreverence and self-reflexivity that signal a new era.

A film that's too smart to put everything up for laughs (its successor, *The Palm Beach Story*, got to spoof screwball), it makes one of its anchors the most sweet-tempered screwball romance in Sturges's oeuvre. The "little bit of sex" the studio bosses kept demanding of *Sullivan* turns out here to be a very little bit indeed. Everything from Veronica Lake's masquerade of street smarts as 'The Girl' to McCrea's brotherly concern for her welfare keeps the mood companionable rather than febrile. It's probably Sturges's least sexually charged set-up, with McCrea sheltering rather than seducing Lake, shielding her in hobo flophouses; their wildly disparate heights are played for gentle laughs in long shot. Despite the cartoonish posters declaring "Veronica Lake's on the take", her cool, tagalong style keeps the tone of the love story easygoing rather than the brassier, goofier or rapacious note that the studio's suggestions – Barbara Stanwyck, Lucille Ball, Ruby Keeler – might have sounded. Similarly, westerns veteran McCrea was chosen specifically to embody Sullivan's integrity.

Peter Swaab's nicely detailed booklet essay reveals McCrea's surprise at being singled out: "No one writes a script for me. They write a script for Gary Cooper and if they can't get him, they use me." You don't catch it the first time around, being too distracted by the fast-talking fireworks, eruptions of slapstick and the protean plot, but his stoical, irritated naturalism is what grounds the movie. His deliberate mien adds an edge of decency rather than directorial ego to Sullivan's quest to identify with the dispossessed.

Pinballing around McCrea is a bevy of the eye-and-ear-catching minor characters Sturges specialised in. From the verbose Greek chorus of Robert Greig's disapproving butler through Jimmy Conlin's Pollyannaish chain-gang 'trusty' right down to the tramp whose dismissive "Amateurs!" caps Lake and McCrea's inept attempt to hop a freight train, they all contribute something vital and fully rounded. Consequently one of the niftiest inclusions in this Arrow package is 'The Preston Sturges Stock Company', an A-Z rundown of the long roster of character actors he repeatedly employed, with well-chosen clips of their finest moments.

Sturges's skill with characterisation also crops up in Kevin Jackson's capacious critical overview of the film, where its range of chewy characters, sense of generous fun and democratic pieties prompts Jackson to propose it as the most Dickensian movie not actually adapted from Dickens. But although the camera pans over hobo jungles and shackled prisoners with compassion, the film surely also suggests a the-poor-are-always-with-us resignation about social conditions that Dickens wouldn't share.

Jackson and Terry Jones, who provides a thoughtful fan-and-filmmaker commentary, are spot-on, however, about the movie's visual inventiveness, which doesn't always get its due but shows to full advantage here in a sharply gorgeous Blu-ray transfer. The 'Poverty Montage', in which the camera slips through the hobo



A scene in which prisoners enjoy a Disney short

underworld with a combination of documentary eloquence and silent-era sentimentality, is truly arresting, as is the concussion-hazed courtroom sequence that leads Sullivan into prison and out of privilege. These are the distinctly *noir-ish* work of cinematographer John F. Seitz, who went on to shoot *Double Indemnity* and *Sunset Boulevard*.

The violent capital-versus-labour train-top spoof of heavyhanded social-realist metaphor – the film's shock ending and also its propulsive beginning – signals that *Sullivan's Travels*, famous as a road movie, is really more of a railroad movie. Trains adopt multiple meanings here, as the site of everything from hog-and-hobo-carrying hilarity and chaste romance to the violent robbery of Sullivan in the goods-yard and his subsequent boxcar banishment. A locomotive, bearing down mercilessly on the thief, who is unable to leave Sullivan's scattered cash to the rails, even performs the ritual sacrifice that wipes

What other film would skewer the Popular Front movies of the time and then unabashedly adopt their pathos and grit?



Sign of the times: Sullivan (McCrea) gets a taste of the hobo life

out Sullivan's identity (his ID is found on the unrecognisable body). Not to mention his class privilege: "Don't I look like a picture director?" he demands of Conlin's trusty, who sees only someone "kinda more like a soda jerk".

Sullivan is anomalous among Sturges's heroes and heroines, who usually connive for or collide with wealth or success or accidental fame, in his active wish to go *down* life's greasy pole. Where he actually passes is from one side of a cinema screen to the other, moving from his high-toned screening-room assumptions about audiences, through uncomfortable disdain for a noisy picture show, into the communality of a church screening for prisoners of Disney's *Playful Pluto*, which grants him the film's famous epiphany about the uniquely restorative powers of screen comedy. Film theorists have pored over this scene and the moving if mawkish rendition of 'Go Down Moses' that precedes it for many years, and latterly with that deep seriousness more usually reserved for ambiguous medieval manuscripts. André Bazin and James Agee got their licks in early, reproaching Sturges for creative cowardice and cynicism respectively. More recently, critics have espoused the juxtaposition of brutalised men and the cruel ironies of Pluto's stuck-to-flypaper plight as a progressive message nestling covertly underneath Sullivan's breezy manifesto for comedy.

As an eclectic and terminally playful piece, it will doubtless go on offering up new meanings for as long as viewers wish to tease them out. Sturges himself cheerfully confessed that he couldn't ever solve the problem of reconciling Sullivan's life lesson and the love story, since both demanded a big finish, and the one would have defeated the other. Diane Jacobs, Sturges's best biographer, notes that despite its self-confessed flaws and its unpopularity among his peers, he nonetheless felt that he'd said everything he hoped to say in the film: "If allowed only one, I would be willing to hang my hat on *Sullivan's Travels*." 📽

New releases

BANG! YOU'RE DEAD

Lance Comfort; UK 1954; Network/Region 2 DVD; 85 minutes; 1.33:1; Features: image gallery, promotional material PDF

Reviewed by Jo Botting

Although he mainly worked on B-features, Lance Comfort produced a filmography of dependably entertaining pictures that also managed to offer a fresh perspective on a routine scenario. *Bang! You're Dead* is no exception.

The protagonist is Cliff (Anthony Richmond) a young boy obsessed with guns and constantly toting his toy pistol around the woods near his home, a Nissen hut abandoned by the GIs stationed there during World War II. When he comes across a real gun, also a remnant of the transatlantic visitors, he doesn't realise the danger, and his widowed father (played by Jack Warner) is too preoccupied with his own woes to pay much attention to him. This inevitably culminates in a fatal accident, and the film then follows the police investigation of the shooting, the main suspect being the victim's love rival (Michael Medwin), who was the first at the scene.

The film's novel opening consists of a pre-credit sequence that flashes forward to the story's climax – a scene that's repeated later in the course of the narrative from a different perspective. This, along with the jaunty eponymous theme song, reinforces the film's central message – that guns kill – although Cliff fails to heed the warning. Comfort takes his time relating the tale, reflecting the leisurely paced summer days that Cliff and his friend spend exploring their surroundings. But the post-war British countryside depicted here is no rural idyll unscathed by the conflict; while it may not exhibit the devastating bomb damage of the cities (so beloved of 50s filmmakers), the scars exist much deeper beneath the surface.

Disc: No moving-image extras, just stills and publicity material.

FILMS BY LEOS CARAX

BOY MEETS GIRL/THE NIGHT IS YOUNG (AKA MAUVAIS SANG)

France 1984/86; Artificial Eye/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; 100/116 minutes; Certificate 15; Features: light and makeup tests, outtakes

Reviewed by Thirza Wakefield

Leos Carax was 25 when he completed his second feature, *Mauvais sang* (1986), a sprinting start for the former *Cahiers du cinéma* critic who, in as many years again, has made only three more films – the latest, *Holy Motors*, after a 13-year hiatus. Starring in all but one of his films, as characters usually christened Alex after the director (his birth name is Alex Dupont), Denis Lavant is ageing in pace, and *Holy Motors* has thrown into relief how much and how eloquently Carax's early features are tuned to the experience of being young.

Shot in black and white, Carax's first film, *Boy Meets Girl* (1984), is a simple story traversing big themes, pinned like a cinephile's bedroom wall with iconic images from movie history. This reverential reflexivity might have spelled disaster if Carax hadn't had the talent of a master imitator or the geyser-like exuberance of a young man's imagination. Drawing on German

expressionism and the cool of the French New Wave, he uses ensemble tableaux, chiaroscuro and the close-up to clothe his characters' passions and pure self-absorption – their sorrows and erotic reveries – with a rare dignity. Lavant and Mireille Perrier (he looking like Jean-Pierre Léaud from behind, she like Carl Dreyer's Joan) are nature's *noblesse*, rootless in a modern age.

Shot in colour, *Mauvais sang* came next and tied these same preoccupations to a complex caper love story in which Lavant's Alex is this time hired by gangsters for a heist job. He is catapulted along a madcap path to snatch a culture of a virus from pharmaceutical giant Darley-Wilkinson (spoken like a shibboleth) and as payment be loosed by parachute into the wilderness and anonymity of Switzerland. But this is nothing to wire-walking between the love of one woman (Julie Delpy) and another (Juliette Binoche). Alex has moved through adolescence to – what comes after? Youth is quarantine, and his guts ache. Being young is being fated to play one's self in all its fretful, ill-fitting dispersions. In his death throes, he opines: "If only I can live. If I don't, I'll be furious." This second film is outstanding, every frame a painting, and is narrowly better than Carax's first for being just as earnest and admitting the clowning folly of existential tumult.

Disc: Extras include an exquisite, semi-silent 20-minute montage of light and makeup tests, set build and outtakes of the airborne shoot.

CRY DANGER

Robert Parrish; USA 1951; Olive Films/Region 1 NTSC; 79 minutes; 1.37:1

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

A mean-tempered yet emotionally suppressed number from the seemingly inexhaustible *noir* storehouse, this recently restored beauty was Robert Parrish's debut, after years as a kid actor and editor for John Ford and Max Ophuls.

It's only saying so much to suggest it may be his best film, but even so Parrish thrives with the telescoped-perspective compositions and keeps his varied zoo of characters, led by bitter ice-man Dick Powell, on delightfully long leashes. Angry and innocent, Powell's Rocky is sprung from a bank-robbery prison stint by a lush (the fascinating Richard Erdman), who lies about new evidence in the hope of landing some of the still-unaccounted-for booty. The two bond uneasily, and despite everyone telling him to relax in the post-war sunshine (including



Rocky star: Dick Powell (centre) in *Cry Danger*

noir's loveliest trailer park), and despite Regis Toomey's suspicious cop following him like a guilt trip, Rocky is determined to find the real culprits and get another innocent man out of jug. This means – with Rhonda Fleming in the wings as the other con's ludicrously hot wife – getting at the centre of crime boss William Conrad's small-time syndicate.

The set pieces are unforgettable in their often weird and overt unpredictability. Rocky's visit to the widow (Joan Banks) of the dead man whose paid-for testimony started the whole tale begins as particularly odd tough-guy-tough-gal banter, but then escalates into foreplay, the intimations of casual sex only squashed by a revealing phone call. Even more memorable is the climactic face-off against Conrad, when Powell commands the semi-fat man to lie across his desk and then plays Russian roulette on him, the villain's huge balding head aiming right at Powell's crotch and gun. The script, written by genre master William Bowers, is packed to the seams with spry sarcasm and hidden connections, and Joseph Biroc's cinematography is rich with realistic details. An integral link in the noir narrative.

Disc: Adequate transfer of the lovely 2011 restoration.

THE DRIVER

Walter Hill; USA 1978; StudioCanal/Region B Blu-ray; Certificate 15; 92 minutes; 1.85:1; Features: alternative opening scenes, trailers

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

One of the first of what would be many variations on a theme of Jean-Pierre Melville (others later performed by John Woo, Michael Mann and Nicolas Winding Refn), *The Driver* isn't so much a remake or rip-off of the previous decade's *Le Samourai* as a conscious part-homage whereby familiarity with the earlier film (by no means easy to arrange in 1978, when Britain had yet to see the full version of Melville's masterpiece) actually enhances appreciation. In particular, an apparent set-up whereby Isabelle Adjani's gambler accidentally sees the face of Ryan O'Neal's taciturn getaway driver mid-job seems to echo the initial innocent encounter between Cathy Rosier's nightclub singer and Alain Delon's hitman but ultimately proves to have far more of a backstory.

That said, the film is not so much a Tarantinoesque series of knowing references as an honourable if quixotic attempt at transplanting the peculiarly European qualities of Melville's universe to a US setting: the telegraphic dialogue would play just as well as subtitles, and it's not surprising that the film was a markedly bigger hit outside the English-speaking world. Michael Small's borderline atonal score and the decision not to give the characters proper names (O'Neal is 'The Driver', Adjani 'The Player', Bruce Dern 'The Detective', Ronny Blakely 'The Connection' and so on) further boost the abiding impression of hyperstylised artificiality at all costs, as does Walter Hill's admission that one of his primary visual influences was the nocturnal urban landscapes of Edward Hopper. But even if this self-consciousness occasionally grates ('ambitious second feature' is almost visibly stamped into



FROM HERO TO ZERO

Andrzej Wajda's tale of a decent man betrayed by the communist system reveals much about the society in which it was made

MAN OF MARBLE

Andrzej Wajda; Poland 1976; Second Run/Region O DVD; 154 minutes; 1.33:1 Features: new filmed interviews with Andrzej Wajda, Krystyna Janda and Agnieszka Holland, 16-page booklet featuring essay by Michael Brooke

Reviewed by Geoffrey Macnab

In its review of the time, the *New York Times* called Andrzej Wajda's *Man of Marble* "a Polish-style *Citizen Kane*". On the face of it, this was an absurd comparison. One film was about a Polish bricklayer; the other a portrait of an immensely wealthy American newspaper tycoon. On closer scrutiny, however, the *Kane* comparison doesn't seem quite so strange. Both films are determinedly self-reflexive affairs in which a journalist or filmmaker investigates the life of a character and, in doing so, reveals many of the tensions and contradictions existing in the society that formed him. Also, both have similar narrative structures, making heavy use of flashbacks and newsreel footage.

As Wajda explains in a 2013 interview included with this pristine new restoration of his film from Second Run, *Man of Marble* was originally conceived in the early 1960s. A group of filmmakers and scriptwriters had met up and were exchanging stories when one of them mentioned a newspaper article about Nowa Huta, a socialist model city built in the 1950s and much celebrated by government propagandists. The article referred to someone turning up for work at the city's job centre; asked his profession, he said "bricklayer". The job-centre officers told him there were no vacancies for bricklayers as the city was already built – all the available jobs were at the local steelworks. The man walked off. After he'd left, the job-centre officials were troubled because he had looked so familiar. Eventually they realised that he had once been a 'model worker' and one of the faces of the construction of Nowa Huta – a socialist hero. Now, he was a forgotten man.

The film that Wajda finally made in 1976 was very different from the one that he and screenwriter Aleksander Scibor-Rylski had first conceived more than a decade before. Back then, the government had prevented them from shooting. Only later, when the reformist Edward Gierek became first secretary, did the authorities relent. As Wajda recalls, they were keen to see themselves on screen and curious to revisit the heady days of the 1950s.

Man of Marble is a film of its period. In its contemporary 1970s scenes, we are in a world of denim, flares and booming synth music. Anyone expecting an austere Polish arthouse movie will be disconcerted by its opening scenes, which play like something out of ITV's *The Professionals*. The most important change



Citizen Birkut: Jerzy Radziwilowicz (centre) as the heroic worker in *Man of Marble*

in the updating of the original project is the foregrounding of the role of Agnieszka (Krystyna Janda), the headstrong young filmmaker who decides to make a documentary about Mateusz Birkut (Jerzy Radziwilowicz), a (fictional) heroic worker who famously laid more than 28,000 bricks during an eight-hour session.

Agnieszka was originally conceived as a character similar to the newsreel reporter Jerry Thompson (William Alland) in *Citizen Kane*. She was supposed to be an unobtrusive presence who provided the gateway into the life of the film's real subject, Birkut. As played by the fiery Janda, however, Agnieszka is anything but unobtrusive. She is full of nervous energy and defiance and is as ready to challenge her commissioning editor as she is to confront interviewees about their role in Birkut's rise and fall.

Janda claims (in an interview included with the DVD) that the inspiration for her character was the poet, songwriter and filmmaker Agnieszka Osiecka. She also talks of how her role was expanded during shooting until she became as much the protagonist as Birkut himself. "The role kept growing while we were shooting. It wasn't written down." Wajda clearly intends her as an emblematic figure, representative of a new, younger generation ready to question the myths of Soviet socialism.

It is a complex film that, seen in 2014, has added layers of resonance... It is itself a part of the history it was dramatising

Man of Marble is a complex film that, seen in 2014, has added layers of resonance. On its original release, Wajda was providing Polish audiences with an opportunity to look back at the 1950s. As he observes – and the censors couldn't help but notice too – he was exposing a fundamental contradiction about the communist system in Poland. The film revealed how badly workers such as Birkut were treated by a state that was supposed to have their best interests at heart. *Man of Marble* is itself now part of the history it was dramatising. The film, as Wajda puts it, offered a preview of Solidarity: Birkut is a forerunner of the characters who stood up against the state during the heady days of the strikes at the Gdansk shipyard during the early 1980s (events dramatised in Wajda's 1981 film *Man of Iron*).

Agnieszka Holland worked uncredited as an assistant director on the film, and the authorities were wary of her because of her family's attritional relationship with the government. (Her father died in suspicious circumstances following a police interrogation.) Holland shot one of the most poignant scenes in the film: the black-and-white newsreel interview with the young Birkut in which he is shown looking shyly at the camera as he is asked for his name and details. It's a scene that has the tenderness and intimacy of one of Krzysztof Kieslowski's vox pop documentaries, and it exemplifies what makes *Man of Marble* so special, namely its human dimension. If you want an insight into Polish society of the 1970s, Wajda provides it, but his film works equally well as a character study of a naive and decent young man betrayed by a government that once fêted him as a hero. 📺

HELL ON THE EL

Martin Sheen makes his big-screen debut in an almost unbearably tense drama of cruelty and callousness

THE INCIDENT

Larry Peerce; USA 1967; Simply Media; Region 2 DVD; Certificate 12; 95 minutes; 1.85:1

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Once rejected outright by the BBFC, Larry Peerce's 1967 drama is now on DVD with a 12 certificate. It's an intense, almost unbearably suspenseful drama of cruelty, callousness and cowardice, though the two hoodlums who spend the film displaying the kind of fiendish sadism that would resonate throughout 1970s exploitation horrors (such as *The Last House on the Left* and *Late Night Trains*) commit few crimes you could rate as more than a misdemeanour. Basically it's name-calling, intimidation and jostling – but it comes across as more upsetting than many a movie killing, perhaps because the sustained campaign of petty nastiness is all too credible.

The Incident was inspired by the Kitty Genovese case, which did involve a rape and murder, but opts not to dramatise it outright: the story went that all Genovese's neighbours heard her being assaulted but didn't intervene or even call the cops (though this has been challenged by subsequent investigations). Here, individual knots of passengers on a late-night elevated train in New York sit huddled and quiet while the creeps pick on everyone in turn.

Screenwriter Nicholas E. Baehr wrote this first as a 1963 TV play more bluntly called *Ride with Terror* – and it is a raw, confrontational work that also has the neat, stage-like construction of the great live TV dramas of the 1950s. It opens with *noir-ish* black-and-white intensity as Joe Ferrone (Tony Musante, the only actor who had been in the TV play) and Artie (Martin Sheen) bully the owner of a pool parlour. In a creepy chat, Joe needles Artie – “Has anybody ever told you you're a little nuts... They're wrong, you're a lot nuts” – about the fact that his tagalong has equal enthusiasm for “pigeons” (mugging victims) and “broads”, establishing a homoerotic undercurrent to their double act and their violence. Musante, with vast sideburns and an open shirt, shows off his ratty, feral grin (he's a talker, more cruel with his words than with his switchblade) while Sheen mostly chuckles, though he later shows a nasty streak of intelligence, coaxing a victim into accepting a roughing-up by saying he has to put on a show for his crazy friend.

In a series of vignettes, we meet other folk out very late on Sunday night, who have mostly had bad evenings... though hometown soldier Carnatti (Robert Bannard) has introduced his Oklahoma pal Felix (Beau Bridges), who has a broken arm, to his lively ethnic family. Ex-alcoholic Douglas (Gary Merrill) brushes off a men's-room pick-up by nervy, unflamboyant



Ride with the devil: Martin Sheen and Ruby Dee

gay Kenneth (Robert Fields). Beckerman (Jack Gilford) complains about his ungrateful son, while his wife (Thelma Ritter) wishes he'd keep quiet about his resentment of the young. Veiled Muriel (Jan Sterling) rounds on her bespectacled failure of a teacher husband Harry (Mike Kellin) after a cocktail party. Stud Tony (Victor Arnold) freezes out his shy blonde date Alice (Donna Mills), manipulating her into putting out. Arnold (Brock Peters), a militant (or just plain angry) black man, fumes at his social-worker wife Joan (Ruby Dee). Cheapskate Wilks (Ed McMahon) persuades his wife (Diana

It is a raw, confrontational work that also has the neat, stage-like construction of the great live TV dramas of the 1950s



Strangers on a train: Beau Bridges (standing) and fellow passengers

van der Vlis) not to spring for a cab, so they have to cart their four-year-old home on the EL.

All these people climb aboard the horribly grubby train. Joe and Artie get boisterous, which makes everyone else look away and keep quiet in a manner that would be more stereotypical on a British train, then start abusing a hapless, insensible wino. Former boozier Douglas tells the hoods to leave the drunk alone. When no one backs him up, the rules change. Joe enforces the reasoning that if someone isn't your friend, why should you care what happens to them? He shows near-demonic insight into his victims and, rather than take support from passengers who enjoy watching him make people they don't like squirm, he attacks them too. Arnold enjoys the spectacle of whiteys at each others' throats but fumes when Joe lets loose a stream of racial abuse. He seems set to be the one to fight back, but his wife pleads “don't kill him” and he humiliatingly reins in his anger. (An explanation for this comes at the end, when the cops finally barge into the carriage and instantly start cuffing the lone black guy, on the assumption that he's the cause of all the trouble.)

It's terrifically cast. Musante and Sheen – then unfamiliar, dynamic newcomers – have charisma to burn, while all the familiar faces do exceptional work (Merrill and Sterling especially). Gerald Hirschfeld's on-the-fly cinematography is excellent, and there's an effective, sparse score by Charles Fox and Terry Knight.

Still a talking-point movie, this is director Peerce's best work – he was a chameleon who made the sensitive interracial relationship movie *One Potato, Two Potato* around the time he was doing episodes of the camp *Batman* show – and suggests his backlist deserves a second look. 

New releases

every frame) and it's hard to care about the fate of any of the characters, individual set pieces remain an absolute blast, especially some of the most kinetically thrilling car chases this side of George Miller's *Mad Max* films.

Disc: Seemingly sourced from the same Fox high-definition master that fuelled Twilight Time's US Blu-ray release, this looks and sounds terrific, and the BBFC cuts originally made to give the film a milder A (aka PG) certificate have been restored.

HOBSON'S CHOICE

David Lean; UK 1954; Studio Canal/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD: 108/104 minutes; Certificate U; 1.37:1 (DVD non-anamorphic)

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

David Lean's *Hobson's Choice*, the most famous film adaptation of Harold Brighouse's much performed theatrical warhorse, is altogether sprightlier than the somewhat lumbering *An Inspector Calls*, which also gets a 60th-anniversary restoration from StudioCanal (see page 101).

This is thanks in large part to Charles Laughton's Rabelaisian rounding-out (aided by Malcolm Arnold's oompah-riddled score) of the bumptious hard-drinking Salford bootmaker who finds his self-appointed role as local patriarch becoming increasingly undermined by events – notably his no-nonsense daughter Maggie (Brenda de Banzie) suddenly deciding that she's had enough of his taunts and their underlying assumption that she'll remain a full-time spinster and carer. John Mills does a decent enough job as the illiterate sad-sack Willie Mossop, whose leatherworking genius becomes central to Maggie's plans, although original casting choice Robert Donat might have added more spark (his rarely seen 1949 film *The Cure for Love* saw him playing a very similar character, though with the significant advantage of a native Lancashire accent). But it's Laughton and the underrated de Banzie who really get the fur flying in their many onscreen clashes.

Filming partly on location in Salford, Lean returns to the high gothic style of his 1940s Dickens adaptations (the crepuscular opening, with its silhouetted boots looming into the frame, seems to herald something far more sinister than Laughton's Hobson staggering home roaring drunk), although the famous scene of Hobson chasing a full moon reflected in multiple puddles seems a little too self-consciously stylised in its original context: it works better as an illustrative clip in a documentary about Laughton or Lean. On the film's release, the *Monthly Film Bulletin* complained that the source material "seems to have reached the somewhat uneasy stage of appearing dated without having yet become 'period'", but that's hardly an issue now: indeed, we now know that the film itself was the end of several eras, not just Laughton's final British film but also the last Lean film shot in black-and-white Academy and set in his native country.

Disc: Sourced from the recent BFI restoration, the Blu-ray in particular does full justice to Jack Hildyard's rich monochrome images. A brief but engaging interview with Prunella Scales recalls the jovial on-set atmosphere, while a longer chat with co-writer Norman Spencer sheds more substantial light on Lean's working methods.

If....

Lindsay Anderson; UK 1968; Eureka!/Masters of Cinema/Region B Blu-ray; 112 minutes; Certificate 15; 1.66:1; Features: short films ('Three Installations', 'Thursday's Children', 'Henry'), commentary (Malcolm McDowell and David Robinson), interviews, trailers, booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Five years separated *This Sporting Life* from *If....* and in the meantime Lindsay Anderson had become thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the Czechoslovak New Wave, to the point of poaching Miloš Forman's cameraman Miroslav Ondricek because he was so impressed by the way he and Forman had cracked the conundrum of making full-length features with the same devil-may-care spirit as Anderson's Free Cinema activities of a decade earlier, despite working within a system that was notionally just as rigidly stratified as the British film industry – and the typical British public school.

Although *If....* has understandably been cited as the ultimate *film de 1968*, that's merely a coincidence of timing, not least because David Sherwin and John Howlett's script was written much earlier. In any case, date-stamping it undermines the film's power, its analysis of the generation gap (between individual school years as much as actual generations) and the lack of viable outlets for disaffected youth other than cathartic but (literally) dead-end violence could hardly be more torn from current headlines,

with Peter Jeffrey's tweedy yet 'progressive' headmaster being especially on the nose.

But political nous and barbed satire alone don't make for a great film: Anderson also shares Jonathan Swift's philosophy – "I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth" – treating his would-be revolutionaries with genuine affection. Their musings over the big questions (with sex and death looming large) are both touchingly adolescent and profoundly human.

Disc: A magnificent release. It shares the same cinematographer-approved high-definition transfer, the Malcolm McDowell/David Robinson commentary and the Oscar-winning documentary *Thursday's Children* (co-directed by Anderson and Guy Brenton) with Criterion's own deservedly acclaimed Blu-ray edition, but there's much more: two other early Anderson documentary shorts and new interviews with 11 cast and crew members totalling nearly two hours. Invaluable for historians, these demonstrate what the great BECTU History Project has long realised: that junior employees on a film project often notice and recall more than their overworked superiors. The booklet is the usual jam-packed effort, including Anderson's combative self-interview from the original press pack and David Cairns's wry deconstruction of the eyebrow-raising claim that it's David Cameron's favourite film.



If.... Its analysis of the lack of viable outlets for disaffected youth other than cathartic violence could hardly be more torn from current headlines

Television

THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

BBC; UK 1964; Simply Media/Region 2 DVD;
Certificate U; 300 minutes; 4:3

Reviewed by Robert Hanks

Susan Sontag, 'Notes on "Camp"', January 1964: "What Camp taste responds to is 'instant character' [...] and, conversely, what it is not stirred by is the sense of the development of character. Character is understood as a state of continual incandescence – a person being one, very intense thing."

If Sontag had seen this BBC version of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, also from 1964, she would surely have seized on it as an instance of what she meant. Alan Badel does not take much notice of character development: in the early episodes, as the naively optimistic Marseillaise sailor Edmond Dantès, and then as the starved and maddened prisoner in the Château d'If, he holds the screen but is unconvincing – too old at fortysomething and, an opera critic might point out, too fat. A plot crowded with incident and a supporting cast studded with familiar faces – Philip Madoc, Morris Perry and Michael Gough as Dantès's enemies, Michael Robbins (Arthur in *On the Buses*) effective as his unreliable, drunken friend Caderousse – are enough to keep it bubbling along; but it is not until the fifth of the 12 episodes, when Dantès is transformed into the fabulously wealthy Count of Monte Cristo, that Badel emerges as a star.

It is a wonderful, dominating performance. In every swift, decisive gesture, every tilt of the chin, lowering of the eyelids and curl of the lip, in the full-bellied, mocking laugh he directs at lesser mortals, Badel expresses an absolute, immovable self-possession, an Olympian disdain for common manners and morals. We tend to talk about acting in terms of what is expressed, but often what makes a performance interesting is what the actor dares to omit: at moments when a more conventional performer might be tempted to offer a revelation of weakness or moral realisation, Badel's count eliminates compassion, guilt or uncertainty. It is not a two-dimensional performance – there are layers of poisonous irony, cruelty and wit – but he does not deal in the dimension of time, of development: instant character, continual incandescence.

In case you wonder why Badel was not a bigger screen star, look at his performance as a Middle Eastern villain in Stanley Donen's *Arabesque* a couple of years later: the wrong context can make his style seem theatrically leering and cheap. The only performance of his I've seen that lives up to *Monte Cristo* was Count Fosco in the 1982 BBC adaptation of *The Woman in White*, and you can't make a career out of counts.

Though Badel is the main event, Peter Hammond's production has plenty else to recommend it. Actors come and go at speed but Cyril Shaps, Rosalie Crutchley, Sandor Elès and Valerie Sarruf (as the harem slave Haydée, Monte Cristo's instrument of revenge and, perhaps, his redemption) all manage more than vivid sketches. The underrated Anglo-Catalan composer Roberto Gerhard wrote the theme and incidental music – a sequence of haunting, understated flourishes. Anthony Steven's adaptation tracks the story's convolutions assiduously, filling out some voids very skilfully (the count's purchase of Haydée



The Count of Monte Cristo In every decisive gesture, every tilt of the chin and curl of the lip, Alan Badel expresses an absolute, immovable self-possession

from the Ottoman sultan is an astonishing piece of cod-orientalism, all the more extraordinary for being done in fuzzy black-and-white). Harsh technical and budgetary constraints are visible at key moments, particularly in a scene with a runaway carriage, edited to within an inch of its life and still managing only the feeblest impression of speed and panic. But Hammond achieves some striking effects too – a courtroom scene shot partly from behind Haydée's veil; the expressive angling of camera lens and actor's body when Michael Gough's magistrate is seized by madness and his arm jerks diagonally across the screen. At moments like these *The Count of Monte Cristo* moves beyond camp and towards something almost sublime. **Disc:** Shot mostly on low-quality videotape, with a few location scenes filmed. Picture quality is acceptable throughout, sound level variable. No extras.

GENERATION WAR

Germany 2013; Arrow Films/Region B Blu-ray/
Region 1 DVD; Certificate 15; 274 minutes; 16:9

Reviewed by Robert Hanks

Responses to *Generation War* (*Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter* – 'Our Mothers, Our Fathers') have revolved around questions of morality and historical accuracy. When it was shown on German television last year, it was widely (though far from universally) praised as an unusually honest and nuanced portrait of the experience of young Germans in the Second World War. British and American critics have,

by and large, been more sceptical, liking aspects of the drama but wondering whether it lets its heroes (and, by implication, modern Germany) off the hook for Nazism and the Shoah.

The three episodes follow five young friends, three men, two women, from the summer of 1941, just before the invasion of the Soviet Union, through to the end of the war. They begin as optimists ("It will all be over by Christmas", ad nauseam), but are forced into betrayals and brutality, and learn that war in general is hell and this particular war futile and vicious. But all the characters are to some degree sanitised, untainted by ideological Nazism, well disposed towards Jews – hey, one of the chums is a Jew, and the worst anti-Semitism he encounters comes from Polish resistance fighters (the series was not well received in Poland).

The real objections to it are less moral than artistic: sketchy characterisation, a plot over-reliant on coincidence, a readiness to confuse good looks with virtue, and a flinching from the true horrors. Still, there are moments: wandering in a Ukrainian forest, sated with violence, a German officer realises that the ground he is treading on is sodden with blood and writhing with insects fed fat on human flesh. And the real interest is sociological: precisely because of its failings, *Generation War* inaugurates a new phase in the German dialogue with the past – one in which historic guilt competes with nostalgic cheesiness.

Disc: Good, clean picture and sound. No extras. **S**

New releases



AN INSPECTOR CALLS

Guy Hamilton; UK 1954; Studio Canal/Region B

Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD: Certificate PG; 80/77 minutes; 1.37:1 (DVD non-anamorphic); Features: Jane Wenham interview

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Although it was Stephen Daldry's 1992 National Theatre revival that firmly established the notion of J.B. Priestley's 1945 GCSE set-text fixture as a far more subversive and politically barbed piece than its upper-middle-class postprandial surface might suggest at a casual glance, those virtues still come across even in a far more conventionally staged adaptation such as this official film version.

Guy Hamilton's competent but anonymous direction makes little attempt to conceal the theatrical roots, although screenwriter Desmond Davis introduces an important change in turning the hitherto unseen Eva Smith, around whom the piece's various individual mini-dramas revolve, into a flesh-and-blood character seen in flashback from multiple viewpoints. Jane Wenham's interpretation proves to be one of the film's major assets, turning someone who was a mere cipher in the original into what is by some distance the most complicated character, a fiercely independent-minded woman (a more restrained Emily Wilding Davison, still alive in 1912 when the film is set) doomed by her spirited refusal to play by the rules laid down in both written and unwritten form by English society in general and by the often hypocritical expectations of individual members of the arrogant and complacent Birling family.

As their heavy-lidded inquisitor Inspector Poole, Alastair Sim delivers the other standout performance, underplayed when set against his other 1950s screen roles (he went straight from this to a spellbinding drag act as the St Trinian's headmistress) and all the more effective for it. In particular, he brings a much needed lightness of touch to the original play's heavy-handedly moralistic finger-wagging, and it's hard to think of another British above-the-title star of the era who could do such an effective job of making the overtly supernatural elements entirely credible without any special effects.

Disc: Since *An Inspector Calls* was made at the very start of the widescreen era in Britain, and recent research has established that it would have been shown in both Academy and widescreen ratios in 1954, it's a shame that StudioCanal didn't offer both options along the lines of Criterion's *On the Waterfront* or Eureka's *Touch of Evil*, although the transfer is otherwise very good. The only extra is a brief interview with Wenham.

THE MAX LINDER COLLECTION

MAX WANTS A DIVORCE/SEVEN YEARS BAD LUCK/BE MY WIFE/THE THREE MUST-GET-THERES

Max Linder; USA 1917/21/21/22; Kino Classics/

Region 1 NTSC DVD: 1.33:1

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

Once an authentically forgotten figure, Max Linder is by now fairly ensconced in the history of silent film, as the comedy director-star (of more than 200 shorts, beginning in 1907) who shifted the nature of cinematic farce away from simple, generic knockabout sight gags and towards narratives revolving around a vexed comedic persona – in his case,



Behind bars: *The Pawnbroker*

a self-satisfied and hedonistic ladies' man constantly plummeting into trouble due to his roving eye and narcissistic cluelessness.

Famously, he predated Chaplin, Keaton and Lloyd, all of whom lifted gags, stories and details from him, and saw his career turn on a hinge – after he returned from the First World War, depression saddled him to a devastating degree, eventually leading to a spectacular suicide pact with his young wife in 1925. In the interim, he made a few more films, mostly a handful of features in Hollywood, and those spectral movies are what we get in this collection – the final struggles towards spry humour by a man with his eye on the grave.

Coming first, Linder never had the visual acumen, speed and filmmaking eloquence of his inheritors, and these movies see him reworking territory familiar to him, though for the first time at feature length. They are not the masterpieces one might hope for from a disillusioned *artiste maudit* who pulled a Chatterton in a Parisian hotel, but they offer a distinct and idiosyncratic silent-comedy personality, hustling through Hollywood polish for the first time and taking their sweet time in exploring their scenarios' capacities for schtick, humiliation and laughs at the expense of a modern masculinity brought down by reality.

Still, Linder's sad circumstances can't help but inform the movies, especially since they are almost all concerned with romance and marriage. *Max Wants a Divorce*, the only two-reeler, exploits the old inheritance-only-if-you're-a-bachelor set-up, inspiring the newly married hero to stage his own infidelity with his reluctant wife's help – leading to jealous misunderstandings. *Be My Wife* is so complicated that it seems to go a little delirious in its final act, as the foppish Max pursues and wins an aunt-dominated maiden only to have their marital life turn into a torture chamber of suspicion and skulduggery (reaching a surreal Feuilladean apex in a couturier shop bizarrely outfitted with secret panels for the sake of illicit rendezvous). *Seven Years Bad Luck* extrapolates an entire cascade of misfortune out of the breaking of a mirror (including the faked-reflection gag the Marx Brothers robbed for *Duck Soup*), while *The Three Must-Get-Theres* takes aim at Douglas Fairbanks's hit of the year before with bad puns, midget jokes (generally, Linder indulged in a good deal of politically

incorrect lampoonery) and some impressive sword-duelling stunt work. Throughout, Linder's camera style is unhurried and simple in a manner that also recalls Feuillade, and his acting persona is never less than deft, realistic and, compared with the Big Three for whom he paved the way, uncompromisingly unsentimental.

Disc: Nicely restored prints, with a notable drop in intrinsic print quality for the older short. Contextualising extras, a sadly fading phenomenon, would have been nice.

THE PAWNBROKER

Sidney Lumet; USA 1964; Olive Films/

Region 1 DVD; 116 minutes; 1.85:1

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

Sidney Lumet's long career passed three major eras – neophyte TV-spawn megadramatics, hypnotic post-*Easy Rider*/Nixon-'Nam ultrarealism, and big-ticket autumnal wheel-spinning – and *The Pawnbroker* is one of the keystone projects of the first period, when Actors Studio-trained thespians flared their nostrils in super-close-up, slate-sky black-and-white commanded the urban landscape and Sociopolitical Meaningfulness was always right under the skin.

Based on a novel by Edward Lewis Wallant, this brooding, dark-dream chamber piece, released just a few years after the Eichmann trial, was one of the first instances of a Hollywood film seriously tackling the Holocaust in general, and absolutely the first to make the 'secret society' of survivor trauma its primary subject. Famously, Rod Steiger is the bottled-up Auschwitz survivor managing a bedraggled pawnshop in Harlem, trying to keep order in his small-time world while being confronted with real people with desperate needs every day, and approaching implosion.

The performative archness and early-Lumet emphasis are everywhere and forgivable, as is the heavy symbolism of the security caging of the pawnshop, making every shot a view through zoo bars, the shadows of imprisoning wire and steel mesh filling the frame. It was the mid-60s, after all, when Hollywood was just awakening to the art film's gestalt of visual expressionism and spontaneous grit. And if in its day the film's bulldozing style impacted filmgoers, today it feels like a naive but earnest struggle to accommodate the experience of the Holocaust in American culture, long before everyone agreed on how that should be done. In any case, how subtle is Lumet's dark knot of angst compared with today's middlebrow 'issue' films?

What's vivid is the degree to which Steiger's Sol Nazerman, because of his past, lives in an entirely different 1964 New York to every other character – and the film is eloquent about the separation. Steiger, with his sad eyes hidden by the shadows of his eyeglass frame, is most effective when he doesn't fume and seethe, but the whole cast pales before the nuanced and crystalline sincerity of Geraldine Fitzgerald as an earnest charity solicitor who seems to want more from the recalcitrant Nazerman than he can give. An Oscar-built pathmark in the growth of American post-war cinema, Lumet's movie does not seem ageless, but it doesn't need to as a fact of history.

Disc: A fine transfer, but no supplements.

New releases



THE ROAD TO GLORY

Howard Hawks; USA 1936; Simply Media/

Region 2 DVD; Certificate U; 1.33:1

Reviewed by Philip Concannon

Made in 1936, Howard Hawks's *The Road to Glory* (no relation to his silent picture of the same name) builds on the previous war films Hawks had made at that point, while developing themes that would come to fruition later in his career. The film is largely a retread of his 1930 drama *The Dawn Patrol* but it is most interesting as an examination of men living in *extremis*, which prefigures the great *Only Angels Have Wings* three years later. For the characters in *The Road to Glory*, soldiers engaged in trench warfare in France in 1916, death is a constant presence, and Hawks is fascinated by the courage, gallows humour and fatalism they exhibit under these circumstances.

The script by Joel Sayre and William Faulkner follows the standard template of these pictures, with two men competing for the love of a woman, but as the sole female presence in the film, June Lang struggles to make much of an impact, and the more compelling relationship is the one between Warner Baxter and Fredric March. Baxter's Captain La Roche is a troubled man who has resorted to pills and booze to cope with the trauma of losing 50 per cent of his men on every advance, while March's Lieutenant Denet is a more happy-go-lucky type who instantly wins the men's affection. The two are initially set at odds with each other but a bond soon forms and we get the sense that the younger man is slowly morphing into his superior, as the horror of war takes its inevitable toll.

The Road to Glory has a tendency to lurch from one plot point to another but individual sequences are superbly staged by Hawks, notably a scene of a wounded man being stranded in no man's land, his piercing howls sounding through the trenches. A title like *The Road to Glory* may suggest a film building to a triumphant climax, but Hawks always keeps the human cost and the ultimate futility of war at the forefront.

Disc: No extras and a muddy image that doesn't do justice to Gregg Toland's cinematography.

THE SHADOW OF THE CAT

John Gilling; UK 1961; Final Cut Entertainment/Region 2 DVD;

Certificate 12; 79 minutes; 1.33:1; Features: 'Shadowplay' making-of featurette, 'Catastrophy' audio commentary from Ian Scoones, special effects assistant, stills gallery, trailer

Reviewed by Kim Newman

In the middle of the highly coloured horror boom inaugurated by Hammer's first Frankenstein and Dracula films, there was a trickle of black-and-white British pictures that plainly cashed in on these resurgent gothics but also looked back to other forms of the genre.

Officially a BHP production but made by Hammer technicians, *The Shadow of the Cat* is a Victorian melodrama with Poe overtones. It opens with a dotty matriarch (Catherine Lacey) reading 'The Raven' to her tortoiseshell (not black) cat Tabitha and being murdered by the servants (Andrew Crawford, Freda Jackson) at the behest of her pompous husband (André Morell). Tabby persecutes the villains, who call in an even more disreputable trio of dastards (Richard Warner, William Lucas and Vanda



Orchestral manoeuvres: *Unfaithfully Yours*

Godsell) to track and kill the animal. Barbara Shelley, as pure and spirited as a Wilkie Collins heroine, is the sole sympathetic family member, and keeps insisting to the baddies that Tabby is just a harmless house cat, even as the animal tricks her mistress's murderers into drowning in a swamp or falling from a great height.

John Gilling, who would make several major Hammer horrors (*The Reptile*, *The Plague of the Zombies*), does very well by this minor one, coaxing appropriately full-blooded work from the character cast and even imbuing the not-very-threatening cat with an air of appealing menace. It's about horrible people getting what they deserve rather than innocents in peril, so it's seldom scary... but its macabre lightness of touch extends to an amusing coda that stands as an early example of the (later commonplace) horror-starting-all-over-again-with-the-house's-new-owners ending.

Disc: The 'making of' featurette extensively goes into the issue of whether this is or isn't a Hammer film. There is also an audio chat with effects assistant Ian Scoones and a trailer.

SLEEPAWAY CAMP

Robert Hiltzik; USA 1983; Scream Factory/Region A Blu-ray and Region 1 DVD Dual Format; 84 minutes; 1.78:1;

Features: new commentary track with stars Felissa Rose and Jonathan Tiersten, commentary track with Rose, Robert Hiltzik and webmaster Jeff Hayes, cast and crew interviews, short film 'Judy' by Hayes, theatrical trailer

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

In the M. Night Shyamalan *Twist Ending* Hall of Fame, there's a special wing reserved for the big – or, rather, slightly shrivelled – reveal in Robert Hiltzik's *Sleepaway Camp*. Suffice it to say that it's a male member, and it's in a place where you don't expect to find it, and rewatching the film with someone who's never seen it before, as I did on this most recent go-around, is a hoot, because the gotcha shot comes so entirely from out of nowhere.

Even once you know what's coming, *Sleepaway Camp* has that *je ne sais quoi* that recommends it to repeated viewings – witness the ubiquitous and even overbearing presence of superfan and SleepawayCampMovies.com webmaster Jeff Hayes on Scream Factory's new Blu, made with a 2K scan from the camera negative.

The story of a killer on the loose at an unmistakably upstate New York summer camp, Hiltzik's film revolves around a silent and brooding prepubescent girl named Angela, (Felissa Rose) who, for whatever reason, won't

go swimming with the other kids, and Ricky (Jonathan Tiersten), her overprotective cousin. The film's attractions can mostly be attributed to the other kind of 'camp' – elaborate and credulity-straining murders, pure Jersey brogues and meathead camp counsellors arrayed in package-hugging shorts. Gender-swapping, traumatic homosexual flashbacks and paedophilia are among the other key ingredients in this cult comfort food, though the real yawks are to be had at the fact that such spurious product has assumed a kind of dignity in the course of three decades.

Disc: Shot on a shoestring, *Sleepaway Camp* looks as close here as it ever will to a million bucks. Three separate commentary tracks commemorate the shoot as though it were an event equal in historical importance to Gettysburg.

UNFAITHFULLY YOURS

Preston Sturges; USA 1948; Simply Media/Region

2 DVD; Certificate PG; 100 minutes; 1.33:1

Reviewed by Philip Concannon

Most surveys of Preston Sturges's career tend to focus on the extraordinary run he enjoyed at Paramount in the early 1940s – and with good reason. Over the course of four years, he wrote and directed eight films, most of which are now hailed as comedy classics, and that output alone is enough to secure his place in Hollywood history, but the pictures he made outside this period rarely come up in discussions of his work. If anyone recalls *The Sin of Harold Diddlebock* today it's probably only because it was Harold Lloyd's swan song, while *Unfaithfully Yours* is widely regarded as the flop that pretty much killed Sturges's career.

In fact, *Unfaithfully Yours* is one of Sturges's most ambitious and daringly structured films, and worthy of consideration alongside his earlier pictures. It initially appears to be the relatively straightforward tale of a renowned conductor (a surprisingly funny Rex Harrison) being given reason to suspect his young wife (Linda Darnell) of infidelity – the kind of situation we expect Sturges to mine for cynical laughs. But when Harrison is conducting his orchestra, *Unfaithfully Yours* suddenly begins operating on another level. To the sound of expertly chosen pieces by Rossini, Wagner and Tchaikovsky, Harrison fantasises about how best to deal with the predicament he finds himself in, mentally running through three scenarios, including one in which he kills his wife and frames her suspected lover.

When presented with this pitch-black farce about an obsessive man having murderous thoughts, a panicked Darryl Zanuck slashed 20 minutes in an attempt to salvage its box-office chances. It didn't work, and it's not hard to see why audiences rejected the picture in 1948, as there's something uneasy in its blend of dark impulses and frantic comedy that never quite gels. But it's a fascinating picture to watch, one that sees Sturges striving to add fresh dimensions to his familiar screwball antics while serving up some of his most inspired set pieces and the kind of dialogue that could only have come from his pen: "You handle Handel like nobody handles Handel. And your Delius – delirious!"

Disc: A decent transfer but no extras. Ⓢ

Read



LE JOUR SE LÈVE

French Film Guide

By Ben McCann, I.B., Tauris, paperback, 136pp, £12.99, ISBN 9781780765921

Le Jour se lève (1939), directed by Marcel Carné, is widely recognised as the classic French poetic realist film. Told in flashback, it recounts the story of a man who has committed a murder, and who awaits his fate as the police close in. Carné shuttles between different registers, tones and textures throughout, marshallng the studio's resources to create striking pictorial compositions. The film also contains the great French star Jean Gabin's most iconic performance as François, marooned at the top of his apartment building. Ben McCann's perceptive and lively book traces the evolution of *Le Jour se lève* and situates it in a very specific historical moment.

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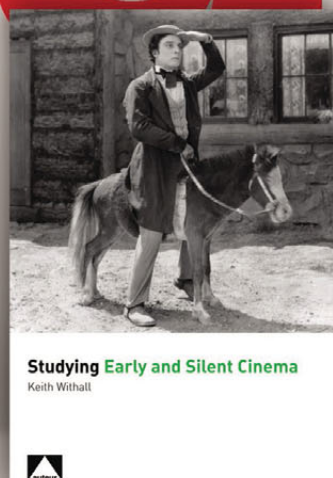


ELECTRIC SHADOWS: A CENTURY OF CHINESE CINEMA

Edited by James Bell, BFI, illustrated, paperback, 140pp, £16.99, ISBN 9781844578498

An introduction to the long and illustrious history of Chinese cinema, from the earliest silent films through the glamour of Shanghai's golden age in the 1930s, from the restrictions of the Cultural Revolution to the grand renaissance of the 'Fifth Generation' directors in the 1980s, and from the underground spirit of the 1990s to the booming multiplex cinema of the present. Along the way it tells the parallel stories of Hong Kong and Taiwan's cinema, and of China's great genre cinema, from wuxia swordplay epics and kung fu spectacles to crime thrillers and eerie ghost tales. Through a range of lavishly illustrated new essays, written by many of the foremost authorities in the field, the fascinating, dramatic history of Chinese cinema is revealed.

<http://shop.bfi.org.uk>



STUDYING EARLY AND SILENT CINEMA

By Keith Withall, Auteur Publishing, illustrated, paperback, 180pp, £18.99, ISBN 9781906733698

This accessible introduction to early and silent cinema, currently enjoying a renaissance, provides both a comprehensive chronology of the period until the birth of sound and also a series of detailed case studies on the key films from the period – some well known (including *The Birth of a Nation*, *Strike* and *The Kid*), some less familiar (including Murnau's *The Last Laugh* and Oscar Micheaux's *Within Our Gates*). As well as covering in detail the major filmmaking figures and nations of the period, the author also provides insights into the industry in less well documented areas.

www.auteur.co.uk



PENELOPE CRUZ

By Ann Davies, Film Stars series, BFI Publishing/Palgrave Macmillan, paperback, 152pp, £14.99, ISBN 9781844574285

Part of a vanguard of Spanish talent claiming success at home and in Hollywood, Penélope Cruz is one of the best-known European stars today.

Focusing on Cruz's key films and their surrounding discourse, Ann Davies explores how the star is called upon to embody different ideas of youthfulness, nationality, exotic otherness, and the mature, established actress. Considering the contradictions of Cruz's star persona – between spontaneity and tightly controlled privacy, between hard work and passive beauty, and between Spain and Hollywood itself – this book charts the development of her career and the questions, difficulties and pleasures it inspires.

<http://goo.gl/DGbBxO>

A LIFE IN THE SHADOWS

EDGAR G. ULMER

A Filmmaker at the Margins

Noah Isenberg, University of California Press, 358pp, £24.95, ISBN 9780520235779

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Though Edgar Georg Ulmer's tendency to embellish his resumé with tall tales is the stuff of legend – Lotte Eisner famously called him “the greatest liar in the history of cinema” — there are a few verifiable facts about the man. Ulmer was born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in what is now the Czech Republic, a decade before the First World War and, in a career that would repeatedly criss-cross the Atlantic and the North American continent, he left a trail of horror pictures, educational films, bargain-basement science-fictions and the odd masterpiece, mostly working with budgets that verged on insult and schedules only slightly longer than a mayfly's lifespan. With Ulmer, poverty was as often as not the mother of invention, and that he managed as much as he did in the course of what was essentially a career-long hustle, contending with the most unpromising of contingencies, is what commands our attention in this era of straitened circumstance.

A contradiction in terms, but Ulmer's obscurity is something like his recognisable trademark. His most famous work is undoubtedly 1945's *Detour*, and his career was one long and winding turn-off from the highway of success. Ulmer's very distance from the centre is central to our understanding of his career, and it is reflected in the language used to talk about him. In 2003, Stefan Grisseman published a German-language biography of Ulmer titled *Mann im Schatten* (literally ‘Man in the Shadows’), and now we have what is destined to become the definitive English-language critical biography from Noah Isenberg, subtitled *A Filmmaker at the Margins*. (Even Ulmer's own unfinished autobiographical novel, from which Isenberg draws excerpts, seems to reckon with the fact of his outsider status – its title is *Beyond the Boundary*.)

Isenberg, who in 2008 contributed a volume on Ulmer's *Detour* to the BFI Film Classics series, is the director of screen studies and professor of culture and media at Eugene Lang College, The New School for Liberal Arts in New York City – I should note that I took a course on *fin-de-siècle* Vienna with Dr Isenberg something like a decade ago. Isenberg's background in German studies offers him a particular insight into the cultural milieu from which Ulmer emerged, and Isenberg is well-equipped to discuss the filmmaker's lifelong ties to his homeland. Ulmer's artistic ambitions were stoked by an early involvement, the extent of which is a matter of some conjecture, with the theatre impresario Max Reinhardt. Some



Dead line: Edgar G. Ulmer's most famous work is 1945's *Detour*, starring Tom Neal and Ann Savage

of the best material here concerns Ulmer's early work on the 1930 independent German production *People on Sunday* (with Billy Wilder and the Siodmak brothers), the fellow émigré collaborators he fell in with once stateside, and his tenacious attachment to the European high art tradition, whose riches he returned to for inspiration even when working on the most

disreputable of Poverty Row product. Isenberg also has a fondness for sentences that are somewhat Germanic in their groaningly elaborate construction, as well as a passion for foreign loan words that goes overboard at times. (One particularly striking example: “Femme fatale of the film *noir* avant la lettre.”)

Isenberg's survey of the breadth of Ulmer's

career is arranged roughly chronologically, though it violates this rule as needed in order to collect thematically similar works under the same chapter heading – one, for example, gathers together Ulmer's films made in America for 'minority audiences' (Ukrainian-language operettas, Yiddish melodramas and pictures aimed at African Americans, Mexican Americans and Native Americans), while another highlights the *film noir* trilogy of *Detour*, *Ruthless* and *Murder Is My Beat*. The fuzzy picture of Ulmer is brought into somewhat sharper focus through Isenberg's original interviews with surviving veterans of Ulmer sets and, most notably, with Arianné Ulmer Cipes, the filmmaker's daughter with his wife and collaborator from 1935 onwards, Shirley. (Ulmer began an affair with Shirley while he was directing *The Black Cat* for Universal, at which time she was still married to an executive who happened to be the nephew of studio head Carl Laemmle. This transgression is said to be the event that preceded Ulmer's exile from the promised land of big-budget productions, consigning him forever more to the shadows, margins, or what have you.)

A *Filmmaker at the Margins* is a decade in the making, and the obviously scrupulous research behind it is evident everywhere, not least in the fact that it's an unusually well-illustrated tome. We first see Edgar as the eldest son of an assimilated middle-class Jewish family in 1912, follow him in production stills across international sets, and last glimpse him cutting a somewhat Lynchian figure in his Los Angeles home, sporting a skyward-reaching shock of white hair. Isenberg cites Ulmer's influence on

Ulmer mostly worked with budgets that verged on insult and schedules only slight longer than a mayfly's lifespan



The hustler: Edgar G. Ulmer

Lynch's *Lost Highway*, amid a slew of comparisons that sometimes overreach themselves, but the author is otherwise to be commended for rarely overstating the importance of his subject, concentrating instead on laying out the known facts of a filmography most *maudit*. The movies speak for themselves, but they have gained an eloquent companion. 

VANESSA

The Life of Vanessa Redgrave

By Dan Callahan, Pegasus, 416pp, £17.99, hardback, ISBN 9781605985572

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

"I worship the water she walks on," said British director Joe Wright of casting Vanessa Redgrave in *Atonement* (2007). It's a comment that captures two notable factors of Redgrave's fame – the general agreement that her work is of peerless calibre, and the accompanying sense that some sort of otherworldly virtue, real or self-styled, clings about her offscreen being. This first biography of Redgrave subjects both elements of her myth to sceptical interrogation, and hints at how the steadfast but eccentric political convictions that have informed her work may also have limited it, both in terms of individual performances and of the scope of her career. Redgrave emerges as an infuriating kook; frequently silly, but conspicuously lacking in humour about herself; prodigiously gifted, but prone to bizarrely inflected performances drawn from her own overly complex interpretations of her material. Less forthcoming is in-depth analysis of her personal relationships, which feels like a bit of a lack. "They would fight and break up and get back together again for most of the 1970s and 1980s" is the best we get on Redgrave's long off-and-on relationship with Timothy Dalton; and though relationships within her famous family get more attention, it tends towards the arm's-length and rushed.

This is doubtless in part because the book has been written without access to Redgrave herself – though many interviews with co-stars, friends and associates have been conducted and called upon – and in part because the author's chief interest is in close reading of Redgrave's actual work rather than decoding her inner life. That the pictures too are all film stills, with no shots of Redgrave in real life, compounds the fact that this is more a study of her work than the 'life' that the title promises. Most of the book is devoted to descriptions of exactly how she comes across in particular roles. If these are sometimes overly long, they are also fresh and insightful: it's not easy to characterise what makes a performance effective or otherwise, and critics often duck the responsibility altogether, but Dan Callahan is skilled at finding feisty, odd, intelligent ways to evaluate the ineffable. He is good at writing about well-known films such as *Blow-Up* (1966), as if unburdened by the received wisdom. His evocation of the atmosphere on the set of *The Devils* (1971), of the meanings of that work and of Redgrave's performance in it, is lively and satisfying.

He does find rather a lot that he doesn't like in Redgrave's back catalogue, and can be dreadfully dismissive. *Prick Up Your Ears* (1987) is "carelessly directed", *Mrs Dalloway* (1997) is "not a film that needed to be made", *Coriolanus* (2011) is "a letdown"... and these are the films for which he has a little more time. So many of Redgrave's work choices and performances are judged



'An infuriating kook': Vanessa Redgrave

peculiar or absurd that Callahan sometimes seems to risk arguing against his own assertion that she can be called "the greatest living actress working in English". This negativity, combined with Callahan's forceful ambivalence in relation to his subject's infamous politics, can render his book a rather dispiriting read. As regards her vocal lifelong leftism and its frequently controversial public expression, he occupies a spectrum between indulgent mockery and contempt, with only grudging acknowledgment that she might actually be sincere in her beliefs. When he writes, "There can be no doubt about her near-lunatic courage or her obstinate need to communicate what she feels," his adjectives supply the very doubt that he denies.

Few would argue the point that Redgrave's convictions have led her to some eccentric positions – including her support for Workers' Revolutionary Party leader Gerry Healy even after he was discredited over his sexual misconduct – or that she has contradicted herself, most strikingly with her acceptance of a CBE. There is also plentiful anecdotal evidence of the negative effect of Redgrave's political evangelism on those close to her. But Callahan seems a little too prone to regard her socialism itself as a mental disorder – he compares it frequently to cult membership – which gets in the way of a full understanding of what she thought her activism might achieve.

The book's informal, often jokey tone gives it a bouncy quality that is in pleasing contrast to its subject's own notorious solemnity. Sometimes it leads Callahan to be too slighting about a minor unseen film that he assumes must have been rubbish; or to drop in a frustratingly under-explained note. He records that at the 1978 Oscars, at which she won Best Supporting Actress for *Julia* and made her career-bruising reference to the "Zionist hoodlums" protesting her support of Palestine, she was subjected to "some old-fashioned hissing (led by host Bob Hope backstage?)" Well, was it led by Hope? Is that fact, possibility or somebody's allegation? Such vagueness can be exasperating – though it is arguably a thematic fit for a subject in whom sophistication seems to co-exist with naivety, and the sharpest insight with the scattiest decision-making. 

EMPIRE OF THE 'B'S

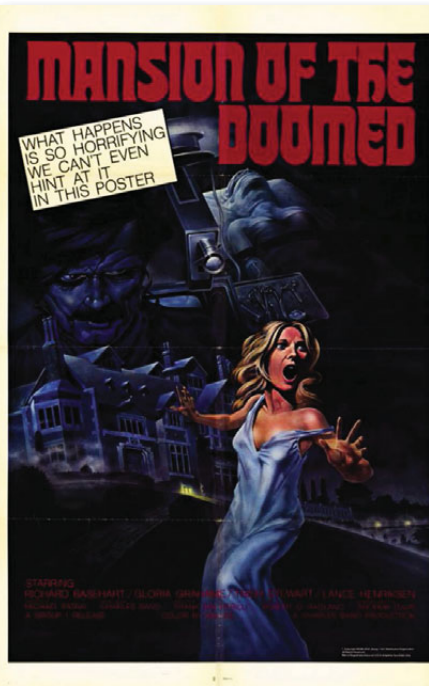
The Mad Movie World of Charles Band

By Dave Jay, Torsten Dewi, Nathan Shumate, Hemlock Books, 378pp, £21.95, ISBN 9780957535268

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Andrew Sarris once wrote, "Eventually we must speak of everything, if there is enough time and space and printer's ink." He was writing about Edgar G. Ulmer, whose cult niche is now assured, but classed most drive-in or grindhouse fare as "subjects for further research". He might not have predicted there would eventually be multiple books on Roger Corman, Hammer Films or George A. Romero. Given that this formerly lost continent has been fairly thoroughly mapped (there's even an outstanding biography of Andy Milligan), it's always welcome when some brave soul sets out to explore a winding pathway that hasn't been gone over in minute detail. For that reason, *Empire of the 'B's* is extraordinarily welcome as a first book-length attempt to encapsulate the ramshackle, endearing, sometimes enervating, sometimes remarkable work of Charles Band.

Essentially a producer and mini-mogul (best known for backing Stuart Gordon's 1985 film *Re-Animator*), Band is also an occasional director (his greatest achievement is 1984's *Trancers*) and a tireless promoter of his various companies' exhaustive output. In the 1980s, Band's promise was "200 films by the year 2000" and a Cannes promotional item issued by his Empire outfit



The horror, the horror: *Mansion of the Doomed*

was a pack of cards with each representing a different Band-backed or distributed movie (some of them never did get made).

This multi-authored book has been in the works seemingly as long as Band's still-unfinished stop-motion epic *The Primevals* (a personal project for the late animator David Allen that began as a 1970 Hammer Films poster for *Zeppelin*

vs. *Pterodactyls*), and appears to have changed approaches almost as often. Like many a Band movie, the book bears signs of several revisions – the three authors identify their, and each other's, areas of interest, and often write personally, but individual chapters are confusingly not signed. It takes a heroic effort to give an accurate representation of a complex filmography, but the book is lightly sprinkled with transcription gaffes, like mistaking 'illicit' for 'elicit'.

This covers Band's career from the 70s, when he put together exploitation items like *Mansion of the Doomed* (1975) and *The Other Cinderella* (1976), through the 80s, when he was a pioneer in home video and turned out a rapid succession of fantastical projects with an authentic pulp sensibility and a degree of lasting, if sloppy, charm. The authors see the story of Empire as bigger than Band, and pay attention to the contributions of directors Stuart Gordon and Renny Harlin (and, at the other end of the quality scale, Tim Kincaid and David DeCoteau), writers Danny Bilson and Paul De Meo (creators of *Trancers* and the underrated *Zone Troopers*), actor Tim Thomerson, composer Richard Band (Charles's brother) and patriarch Albert Band (a John Huston associate who directed B movies in his own right from the 50s).

Flushed with 1980s success, Empire bought Dino De Laurentiis's Rome studio. This led to bankruptcy, financial shenanigans many interviewees are still riled about, and the emergence of the still-active Full Moon Features, whose enormous output (upwards of 13 *Puppet Master* films!) from 1990 to the present day remains to be assessed, perhaps in a sequel to this book. **S**

HITCHCOCK'S PARTNER IN SUSPENSE

The Life of Screenwriter Charles Bennett

Edited by John Charles Bennett, University Press of Kentucky, 328pp, \$40, ISBN 9780813144498

Reviewed by Charles Barr

Charles Bennett's writing career lasted more than six decades. His collaboration with Alfred Hitchcock spanned just one, but it is no real surprise that this provides the book's title, cover image and obvious selling point. There is, however, much more to it than Hitchcock, who appears in only one other illustration among nearly 50, and is the focus of only two of the 18 chapters of Bennett's lively memoir – which was left unpublished at his death in 1995, and now edited and extended by his son John Charles.

Before Hitchcock, there was decorated service in World War 1, and a busy career in England as actor and playwright. Later, there was a stream of film and television credits, mostly on Hollywood scripts, but also taking in Europe, and film and TV direction. Bennett writes entertainingly about the writing culture at the big studios, about his admittance to Hollywood's elite British colony, about de Mille and Errol Flynn, about his WW2 activities as propagandist and low-key spy – and about his unlikely return to Hollywood's inner sanctum at the age of 90, when contracted to script a new version, never produced, of his 1928 play *Blackmail*.

No *Blackmail* remake could have challenged the enduring status of the 1929 film. Bennett's



Partners in crime: Hitchcock with Bennett

Bennett claimed Hitchcock was acutely dependent on his writers, but too insecure to admit this if he could help it

play had given Hitchcock ideal material in the transition from silent to sound; a decade later his script for *Foreign Correspondent* did the same in the adjustment from Britain to Hollywood. In between came the run of six thrillers, starting

with *The Man Who Knew too Much*, that effected Hitchcock's definitive rebranding. Bennett acted as 'constructionist' on the first five, before preceding Hitch in moving to Hollywood. Bennett's line in the memoir is familiar from many of the interviews he gave late in life: for all his greatness as a director, Hitchcock was acutely dependent on his writers, but too insecure or too mean to admit this if he could help it.

Few historians would now deny Bennett's argument, or the importance of his input in helping to shape the illustrious career during this critical period. His editor son may not realise this, since at the start he disarmingly notes, "I have assiduously avoided reading any books of film history, including Hitchcock biographies, to avoid biasing my account." His parallel account becomes all the more valuable as he relates the Hitchcock (and other) scripts, and especially their sexual politics, to his father's long life, seen from his dual perspective as editor of the memoir and as son of a turbulent second marriage. This helps us to see that Bennett and Hitchcock were indeed co-authors.

The book is not free of errors. References to cricket, so important to Hollywood's English colony, are hilariously inaccurate. An image of Kathleen Byron is labelled Margaret Lockwood. More importantly, the second Hitchcock image carries an inscription: "To my first and beloved writer – love, Hitch". Had John Charles Bennett been a reader of histories, he could have supplied a corrective: Hitchcock's first writer, on all nine silent films before *Blackmail*, was Eliot Stannard. If only there were a Stannard memoir, and a Stannard son, to construct a complement to this invaluable Bennett volume. **S**

JEAN-LUC GODARD

Cinema Historian

By Michael Witt, Indiana University Press, 288pp, £20.65, ISBN 9780253007285

Reviewed by Jonathan Rosenbaum

There has been a slew of important books lately devoted to post-60s Godard, including Daniel Morgan's *Late Godard and the Possibilities of Cinema*, Jerry White's *Two Bicycles: The Work of Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville*, and Godard's own *Introduction to a True History of Cinema and Television*, translated by Timothy Barnard – the latter including Michael Witt's 55-page introductory essay, 'Archaeology of Histoire(s) du cinéma'. But none seems quite as durable – either as a beautiful object or as a user-friendly intellectual guide – as *Jean-Luc Godard: Cinema Historian*, Witt's superbly lucid, jargon-free book about *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.

Copiously illustrated with frame enlargements that complement the text without ever seeming redundant, this examination of the philosophical, historical and aesthetic underpinnings of Godard's masterwork isn't only about a four-and-a-half-hour video; it's also about the work's separate reconfigurations as a series of books, a set of CDs, and a 35mm feature of 84 minutes (*Moments choisis des Histoire(s) du cinéma*). And one of Witt's major achievements is to clarify just what Godard means – and doesn't mean – by 'histoire', 'cinéma', and even 'du' ('of' or 'by'). Godard's history (or story) is more a matter of poetry than chronicle, with ties to Benjamin, Braudel, Foucault and Michelet; his 'cinéma' is quite distinct from 'film', having more to do with a collective leap in national self-awareness (as in Italian neorealism) than with any individual achievement. So what Godard means by the



Reel life: Jean-Luc Godard

'decline' or 'death' of cinema excludes his reverence for such key individual artists as Chaplin, Dreyer, Hitchcock, Nicholas Ray and Welles and revolves around the failure of film at mid-century to confront the Holocaust.

Regarding *Histoire(s)* as Godard's *magnum opus*, which brings coherence to, and reveals continuity with, the remainder of his work, Witt persuasively plots out many extensive through-lines. Yet there are times when I wish his conceptual and referential frames were still wider. The overall orientation of his study is, to coin a term, Francocentric, so you won't find Eliot, Joyce, Pound or even Hammett listed in

No other recent book on post-60s Godard is as durable as this one, either as a beautiful object or as a user-friendly intellectual guide

the index; I also regret the neglect of many of Godard's key works as a film critic, including his reviews of *Bitter Victory*, *Hollywood or Bust*, *Man of the West*, *Montparnasse 19* and *The Wrong Man*. When Witt discusses the importance of Alain Resnais's early work to Godard, he overlooks both *La Chant du styrene* (which inspired some of Godard's most rapturous critical prose) and *Last Year at Marienbad*, much of the soundtrack of which is included in the first episode of *Histoire(s)*, as Witt himself recalls in a subsequent chapter.

Considering Witt's thoroughness as a researcher, my only factual quibbles derive from specialised information he can readily be excused for not knowing, such as his suggestion that Godard saw Truffaut's *The Green Room* (*La Chambre verte*). I happen to know this is untrue because I tried and failed to convince Godard he should see it, if only for its implicit critique of *la politique des auteurs*. But this is mere hair-splitting about an essential book. 📖

CINEMA

By Alain Badiou, translated by Susan Spitzer, Polity, 320pp, £17.99, ISBN 9780745655680

Reviewed by Paul Tickell

The theoretical writings of French Marxist philosopher Alain Badiou are sometimes, to my philosophically untrained eye, more like indecipherable algebra than dialectical materialism. But his polemical books like *The Meaning of Sarkozy* are punchy and accessible.

Badiou has a lifelong love of film, represented here by more than 30 essays and reviews spanning 1957 to 2010. It's a bit uneven, but an inveterate Maoist approaching 80, like the proverbial old raincoat, never lets you down, as when he unpicks the Platonism in *The Matrix*. Ideas are left hanging, like his suggestion that Gaston Bachelard's theories about the poetics of space be applied to 'water' films like Vigo's *L'Atalante*, but there are many compensatory insights. In 1957, few French critics were singling out *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946) as an "allegory of cinema".

Though he balks a little at "English humour", he finds time for Ealing, with *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (1949) his favourite. Is this because its avenging central character can be read as an amoral class warrior? Badiou doesn't say, but criticises the film for being too literary and fixated on plot, which in the great films of Lang and

Hitchcock falls away into a 'narrative' defying linearity. He also champions Welles, who is quoted as saying of *The Lady from Shanghai* that "he hadn't understood its plot yet".

With plot melting away, you might expect Badiou to be a *Cahiers du Cinéma*-type dissector of *mise en scène*. He does have things to say about lighting, acting, camera angles, art design and editing. But he is after a bigger picture, seeing cinema as less a machine for dreaming, much more one for thinking. In 'Cinema as Philosophical Experimentation' he proposes the theory that film is a drama of consciousness told through actions, such representations being capable of dealing with big philosophical questions about who we are and where we might be going. These abstractions of human identity and destiny



Losing the plot: Welles's *The Lady from Shanghai*

are rendered concretely, through the moving image. This idea can also deal, even play, with particular political conflicts (what does this war mean?) or with cultural issues (what is gay marriage?). At however basic a level, this puts the audience in a thinking philosophical role: every man is a philosopher, as the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci said, and perhaps never more so than when in front of a screen.

Badiou is entranced by the fact that cinema is a form that is both aristocratic (expertise and high finance facilitate the production) and democratic (the masses are its audience). He refuses to reduce cinema to just another form of pernicious consumerism, which is thereby condemned to aesthetic death. It has been and still is a "dirty" medium because it's a capitalist enterprise, an industry. But the best films, whether Chaplin's transnational 'generic humanity' or the avant-garde provocations of Godard, will always 'purify' the filthy industry, telling us something interesting about life and so giving millions food for thought. Thus cinema fulfils the French modernist Stéphane Mallarmé's great poetic ambition "to purify the language of the tribe" – or in this case the dictates of the market. Is this great high-wire act strung between art and commerce possible under the constraints of the neo-liberal present? Starting from the bad new things not the good old, Badiou gives us a qualified 'yes' in 'On Cinema as a Democratic Emblem', a 2003 piece which alone makes this book worthwhile. 📖

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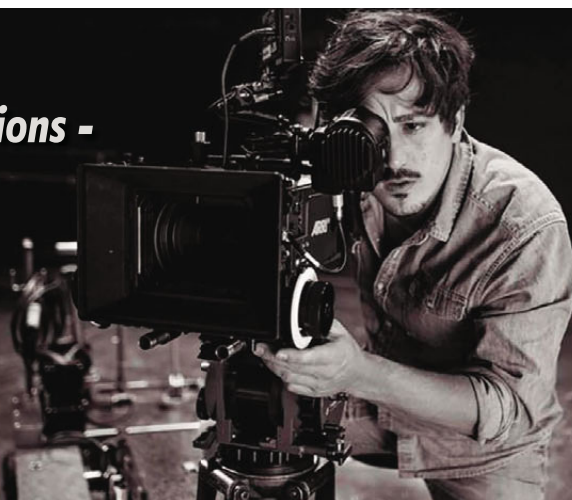
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READERS' LETTERS

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EASTERN APPROACHES

David Thomson's comments are always insightful, and I much appreciated his thoughts on the impact of the films of World War I ('Grand illusions: cinema of the Great War,' S&S, June). These films seem to draw their particular power from three factors: first, this was a war that theoretically was not supposed to happen, on the Western front at least, a war between democracies; then there was the glib arrogance of the military elites who authorised wanton carnage in the name of patriotism; finally, despite the monuments and the medals, this was a war that everybody lost.

I was less happy with the article's dismissive comments on *Lawrence of Arabia*. This remains a great British film, not only because of the contributions of David Lean, Freddie Young and Peter O'Toole, or because its picture of a white-robed hero riding across 'clean' and golden desert sands serves to highlight, by contrast, the mud and the blood of the trenches.

One must look beyond the faces of the cast. (After all, the article does not criticise the portrayal of a French colonel by Kirk Douglas.) Rather than *Lawrence* being a betrayal of Arab interests ("swashbuckling ignorance and blithe racism"), it is still, perhaps with Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers*, the only major Western film to deal with the rise of the modern Arab world. It was based on Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, which strongly supported the Arab cause, and it vividly exposes the crusader attitude of Anglo-French imperialism, which carved up the Middle East with little regard for Arab interests, and whose legacy is many of the region's current problems. The film's one real lie was not having José Ferrer play a Turkish bey, but having Lawrence supposedly unaware of the Sykes-Picot pact, when in fact he was very aware of it and constantly campaigned for its reversal, a key factor in his existential torment.

Ray Lahey Canada

'HEARTS' DESIRE

You will probably receive many letters wondering about omissions in David Thomson's interesting round up of cinema of the Great War. While I was pleased to see offbeat selections such as *The Great Waldo Pepper*, I am stunned that there was no mention of Philippe de Broca's *King of Hearts* (1966), a major comment during the Vietnam era, its depiction of the Great War's insanity none the worse for its 60s whimsy. If *Carrington* – as a comment on war, offbeat to the point of arrhythmic – can be included, at least a mention would have been appropriate.

Michael Carlson by email

MYSTERIOUS 'SKIN'

To weigh in, belatedly, on the *Under the Skin* debate ('Unearthly Stranger' and review, S&S, April; Letters, S&S, June and July)... I heard about the basic concept of film and book through a friend, not long after the first trailers appeared.

LETTER OF THE MONTH TROUBLES EVERY DAY



Thomas Dawson's concluding comment in his review of the excellent *Road* (S&S, July) – the story of the Northern Irish Dunlop motorcycle racing family – that the documentary doesn't address the "sectarian conflict bedevilling the country" is downright bizarre. The film deals with road racing. Is he suggesting that no film can be made in Northern Ireland during

that period that doesn't have terrorism as its backdrop? I find this reductive and offensive. It's like suggesting that no film can emerge from Chile that doesn't deal with Pinochet, or nothing can be set in 60s London that doesn't feature the Kray twins. Films in the cinematic world imagined by Mr Dawson would be very, very dull.

Paul Skillen Belfast

The notion of 'young woman picks up hitchhikers to be processed into food' seemed chilling and intriguing, so I read the book first.

I was disappointed that that tantalising premise was buried inside an intimate character study, not unlike an Iain Banks novel: great depth of characterisation, slightly gloating descriptions of atrocity and amorality, with a strong authorial moral tone sometimes at odds with the material. The analogies to factory-farming seemed particularly heavy-handed.

So I was impressed with Glazer's adaptation, which stripped the story back to that horrific essence and proceeded from there. It's almost a new genre, the social realism SF film, more akin to 70s novels like Bob Shaw's *Dagger of the Mind* (where the boredom of everyday life gradually transforms into the uncanny) than anything in contemporary film.

The same friend noted that a literal adaptation would probably cost \$100 million. This is also worth bearing in mind when critics decry the fact that the film isn't a straight adaptation: how could it be, practically? Necessity has here been the mother of all kinds of wonderful invention.

Matthew McKinnon London

CRIMINAL OVERSIGHT

The synopsis you ran with your review of *Fruitvale Station* (S&S, July) reads: "BART police arrive and detain Grant and several of his friends on the platform. Grant is shot."

I am uncomfortable with the passive "Grant is shot", which seems to imply that this was the natural course of events.

This matters, because Oscar Grant is not a fictitious character, but a young black man brutally shot dead in 2009 by an LAPD officer.

Adele Winston Barnett

Additions and corrections

July p.58 The still credited as *Fortini/Canis* is actually from *Othon*; p.68 *The Art of the Steal*, Cert 15, 90m 12s; p.71 *Blended*, USA 2014. © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. In association with Ratpac-Dune Entertainment. Completed with assistance from the Georgia Film, Music & Digital Entertainment Office. Produced with the assistance of the Department of Trade and Industry South Africa. Dolby Digital/ Datasat. Colour by Technicolor. Executive Producers should also list: James Packer, Steven Mnuchin; p.71 *Brick Mansions*, Cert 15, 90m 33s; p.72 *Camille Claudel 1915*, Cert PG, 95m 1s; p.60 *Cold in July*, Cert 15, 109m 58s; p.75 *Cycling with Molière*, Cert 15, 105m 21s; p.64 *The Golden Dream*, Cert 12A, 108m 55s; p.81 *Mistaken for Strangers*, Cert 15, 74m 48s; p.82 *Of Horses and Men*, Cert 15, 80m 38s; p.86 *Return to Homs*, Cert 15, 93m 51s; p.88 *Seven Streets, Two Markets and a Wedding Glimpses of Lost London 1930-1980*, Cert U, 66m 0s; p.92 *The Young and Prodigious T.S. Spivet*, Cert 12A, 104m 56s, UK publicity title: *T.S. Spivet* June p. 69 *Believe*, Cert PG, 95m 35s; p.89 36, Cert 12, 65m 57s

COME AND SEE



In Elem Klimov's masterpiece of World War II, horrifying realism ends in a hallucinatory rush of image and sound

By Pasquale Iannone

Elem Klimov's *Come and See* (1985) was one of several films made in the Soviet Union to mark the 40th anniversary of the end of World War II. Klimov co-wrote the film with author Ales Adamovich, who was able to draw on his own wartime experiences as a teenage partisan in Nazi-occupied Belarus. In her 2007 book *Russian War Films*, the historian Denise J. Youngblood argues that of the many Soviet films released in that anniversary year, only *Come and See* broke new ground and that to this day it remains "the most powerful anti-war film in Soviet cinema".

The film follows the nightmarish odyssey of a young boy called Florya (Alexei Kravchenko), who leaves his mother and two young sisters to join the partisans. The structure echoes *The Ascent* (1976), directed by Klimov's wife Larissa Shepitko, who died in 1979: in her film, it is two Soviet partisans who embark on a gruelling trek across a harsh, snow-covered landscape after being cut off from their comrades. It is hard to think of two more affecting war films.

For the first part of his journey, Florya is joined by a peasant girl, Glasha (Olga Mironova), but the pair are eventually separated and Florya is left alone. He endures one horrifying experience after another, including the discovery that his

family has been slaughtered by the Nazis; and each episode – each assault on his senses – erodes what's left of his childhood innocence. Klimov immerses the viewer completely in Florya's ordeal. Prowling Steadicam (Academy ratio rather than widescreen) and subjective sound design – most strikingly when he is deafened by artillery fire – capture the boy's seemingly never-ending torment. Above all, *Come and See* features some of the most unforgettable close-ups ever committed to film, showing Florya's transformation from rosy-cheeked, playful youth to battered and traumatised partisan.

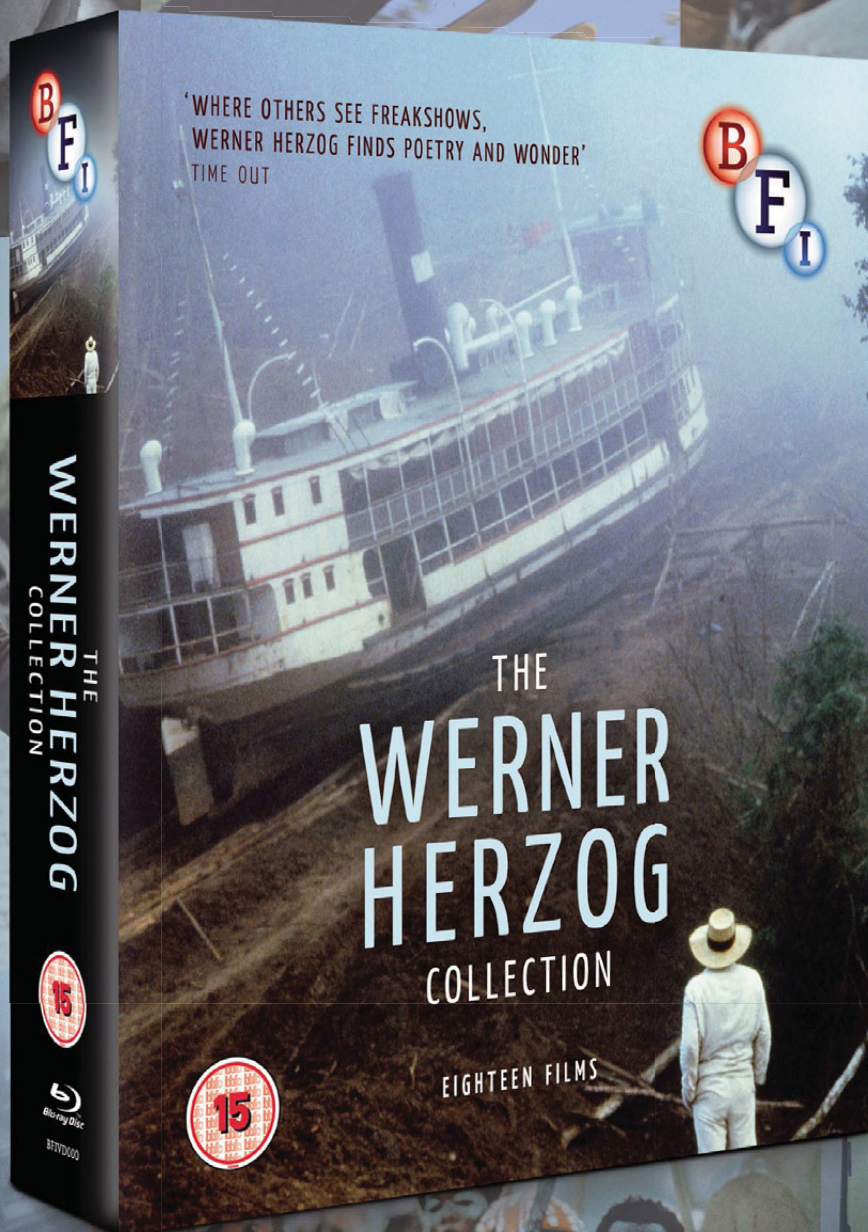
Come and See's final passage takes place in the aftermath of the film's most harrowing sequence – the Nazis' immolation of the entire population of a village in a wooden church; a woman who escapes is gang-raped, while her infant is thrown back through a church window. Florya sees all this – the occupiers even stop to pose for photographs. When the partisans arrive at the scene, they take the remaining Nazi soldiers prisoner and Florya looks on as they are shot dead. He walks around the muddy, smoke-filled terrain until he comes across a discarded portrait of Hitler in a puddle. He stares down at the picture, cocks his rifle and fires a shot into it. Unexpectedly, Klimov cuts to archive

The footage continues, but this time it runs in reverse. Buildings rise from the ashes, battalions withdraw

footage of the Führer meeting members of the Hitler youth. Florya fires another round and the footage continues, but this time it runs in reverse. Buildings rise from the ashes, battalions withdraw, the music of Richard Wagner surfaces on the soundtrack mixed with snatches from Hitler speeches. Klimov rewinds past the war years, to the 1920s and World War I; Florya keeps firing. We see Hitler as a young soldier, then as a schoolboy and finally – chillingly – we come to Hitler as a baby. It is this image that stops Florya in his tracks – he slowly lowers his rifle and the rush of music and sound effects dissipates. A close-up of the boy is held as we once again take in his tormented expression: deep ridges in his forehead, heavy bulges under the eyes, specks of blood on his cheeks, calloused lips.

Does this scene represent a continuation of the film's unrelenting identification with its young protagonist – has a glimpse of the Hitler portrait led Florya to hallucinate the images and sounds that follow? The evidence would suggest that this is the case; then again, would he be aware of the wider events that led to his country's calamity? What is certainly clear in Florya's mind is that the man in the portrait is responsible for the death of those closest to him, as well as the scores of fellow Belarusians who have been slaughtered before his eyes. If Hitler had not existed, then surely millions more of his countrymen would have been spared. *Kill Hitler* was the title of Klimov and Adamovich's original script; but the director was at pains to point out that rather than the man himself, the film's real target was the ideology he represented. 🇷🇺

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